

Restaging "Strays" for Connecticut Ballet - an Interview with Lila York

- 1) Your contemporary ballet, *Strays*, was premiered by Connecticut Ballet in 1990. How do you think it will feel to restage the piece on new dancers some 27 years later?

I restaged *Strays* for Ballet Memphis several years ago, and it was a great experience. I still like this dance very much. It has a 'loneliness in a crowd' feel to it, although it is also quite upbeat and optimistic in sections. It is very much an urban ballet - it is set in an urban landscape, where life proceeds at a lightening pace, and our private lives and thoughts are publicly dismissed or marginalized. So this dance journeys into the private spaces of urban dwellers where they ruminate, feel love and grief, and long for connection.

- 2) According to *The New York Times*, the performance was considered 'amusing' as you 'depicted people infatuated with dancing.' What's your take on the characters in *Strays* and their journey?

I believe that is a quote from an early review. There were two other reviews, one written by Anna Kisselgoff and one by Tobi Tobias, that I think showed a deeper reading of the ballet. They appreciated the quirkiness of some of the characters and the feeling of isolation of the protagonist. The score has so many colors that it made it easy for me to portray a spectrum of characters one encounters in an urban landscape.

- 3) How would you say you've grown as a choreographer since that first commissioned work?

One thing I have discovered is that my math capabilities were very keen in my younger years - and that is a skill that tends to peak early in life. So *Strays* is a dance that is mind-bogglingly complex in terms of patterns and formations. In my later years, my focus has become more intimate, although I still prefer to work with large casts. It is the kind of refocus that comes with maturity. I have always dealt with societal questions and issues, and in that respect, I have not changed. I am fairly cued in to the 'zeitgeist' and what the overriding mood is in the world, and I am always responding to that.