

DANCE

Gigue nouvelle

TRADITIONAL DANCE GETS AN AVANT-GARDE UPDATE

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SPECIAL TO THE GAZETTE

The sprightly old Quebec gigue might not seem like promising material for a contemporary dance work, but don't tell that to Montreal choreographers Lük Fleury and Marie-Soleil Pilette. A Year ago they split a double bill at Montreal's avant-garde dance space Tangente, in which they both stretched the limits of the traditional gigue. The two are back at Tangente tonight and tomorrow, with a new double bill that further takes gigue into exploratory realms.

Both Fleury and Pilette adore the traditional gigue, having danced it for many years. To hear them, the gigue is the soul of Quebec culture. "It's the sum of everything I am" Pilette, 28, said in a recent interview. "It's like my language. If I want to make sure that I'm communicating message, I use French." To communicate in dance, then, she uses the gigue. Fleury too considers the gigue a part of his identity. "It's a basic way of moving for me," he said, "It's a contact with the floor - you strike it or caress it. It's a way of belonging to the earth, and the earth is important in Quebec. It's my way of deepening this relation."

Danced without music of any kind - no fiddles for this jig - Pilette's work as five female dancers moving with, above and under metal-framed kitchen chairs, hence the title, Chaises. The chair idea came out of a five-minute work that she created three years ago. The chair became a "movement generator" that inspired inventive ways of displacing and displaying the body.

"The dancers move the chairs, mold their bodies around them. I think the chair gave me a bit more freedom compared with what I did last year. It's a bit more intellectual, more inward-looking. It's like a game where the chair becomes a toy.

Fleury's work is called Machines II, a follow-up to Machines I last year. Six male and female dancers in army boots - "I like their rough sound" perform seven short, contrasting pieces to non-traditional music that includes electronic and techno sounds.

Unlike the traditional gigue where the movement is all in the legs and feet, Fleury's work exploits the upper body. He also lets dancers come into contact, unlike traditional gigue. One number has three dancers holding hands, jostling and pulling each other. Putting dancers off balance is never seen in the old gigue, where equilibrium is the aesthetic norm. It's one of the ways that Fleury brings the dance form into the 21st century. He calls it "contemporary gigue".

He also fuses different genres to create remarkable contrasts. His work is a mosaic, he said. Indeed, in the opening number, a couple performs to an unexpected mix of gigue and tango. "At the beginning, the duet is serious - the tango side. Towards the end, they start to make fun of the seriousness. "

By reshaping the gigue, Fleury and Pilette hope to encourage new interest in the dance. Both told of people coming up to them after last year's shows to inquire about classes. That's not to say that the traditional gigue was ever dead. Drummondville's Mackinaw group, for example, has 125 members. Other groups perform throughout the province.

Next year, Tangente hosts a gigue festival presenting works by Fleury and five other "contemporary gigue" choreographers. Certainly the gigue at Tangente this weekend is not your father's Oldsmobile.

Chaises and Machines II, tonight at 8:30 and tomorrow at 4 p.m. at Tangente, 840 Cherrier St. Tickets cost \$15 and \$13. Call (514) 525-1500.