



Filipe Portugal  
CHOREOGRAPHER

# Diálogos

Press Release

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## Restless: Ballett Zürich's alternative Christmas fare

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Anna Khamzina and Cristian Alex Assis in Filipe Portugal's *Dialogos*  
Photo Gregory Batardon

### **Opera House, Zürich**

**20th December 2015**

### **Maggie Foyer**

Christian Spuck offered a welcome alternative to the seasonal *Nutcrackers* with a mixed bill aptly named *Restless* with four works that are exploratory, inventive and always engaging.

The evening closed on a world premiere by company soloist, Filipe Portugal, *Dialogos*, with commissioned music from jazz pianist, Nik Bärtsch. Portugal, who wrote *Tau Wetter* for the Junior Company last season, now presents his first work for the main ensemble. For 28 dancers, it again shows his mastery of structure as themes are linked and echoed and the space skilfully used with dancers moving into prominence or backgrounding the action in a constantly evolving dialogue.

The heart of the ballet is the pas de deux. On the surface it's an abstract work but each duet has a soul. I loved the moment when a female dancer quietly insinuates her body into a man's folded arms initiating an intimate duet before slipping away as unobtrusively as she had arrived. The work is full of such delightful and surprising moments. Portugal knows the strengths of his fellow dancers and exploits them to the full. He uses their strong ballet technique and confidently takes it into innovative territory.

Bärtsch's jazz ensemble, Mobile, plays onstage in a compact island of sound. The moody music effectively underscores the sensuality of the movements, cajoling and enticing, but never quite reaching the inventiveness of the choreography. Among the many fine dancers, Juliette Brunner and Alexander Jones stood out, as did Mélissa Ligurgo.



(<http://www.seeingdance.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/Cristian-Alex-Assis-and-Viktorina-Kapitonova-with-Ballett-Zürich-in-William-Forsythes-New-Sleep.-Photo-Gregory-Batardon-Copy.jpg>)

Cristian Alex Assis and Viktorina Kapitonova with Ballett Zürich in William Forsythe's *New Sleep*  
Photo Gregory Batardon

Sol León/ Paul Lightfoot's *Skew-Whiff* is more fun than Christmas and New Year rolled into one. A celebration of physical comedy running at breakneck speed through Rossini's overture to the *Thieving Magpie*, it is interpreted by a quartet of genius. Surimu Fukushi has proved his comic skill in previous programmes and rose triumphantly to the challenges of this fiendish marathon of wit but I was not prepared for Matthew Knight and Daniel Mulligan who also found comedy in every fibre. Katja Wünsche from her high pitch 'hello', to the expressive roll of her hips, hits all the right buttons. Her entrance, shimmying backwards is pure delight. Each dancer brought their distinct personality to Even if Ballett Zürich decided not to present a seasonal shows, the ice rink and traditional Christmas market in the square outside were adequate compensations for the addicts while we, inside, enjoyed excellent alternative dance.



(<http://www.seeingdance.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/Surimu-Fukushi-with-Katja-Wünsche-and-Daniel-Mulligan-in-Sol-León-and-Paul-Lightfoots-Skew-Whiff.-Photo-Gregory-Batardon-Copy.jpg>)

Surimu Fukushi with Katja Wünsche and Daniel Mulligan in Sol León and Paul Lightfoot's *Skew-Whiff*  
Photo Gregory Batardon





(<http://www.seeingdance.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/Katja-Wünsche-and-Alexander-Jones-in-Douglas-Lees-Aria.-Photo-Gregory-Batardon-Copy.jpg>)

Katja Wünsche and Alexander Jones in Douglas Lee's *Aria*  
Photo Gregory Batardon

Sharing the second half of the programme was Douglas Lee's *Aria*, danced by Katja Wünsche and Jones in a performance throbbing with energy. The harsh black surround is softened by clouds of smoke and this mix of solid and ephemeral is matched in the choreography as the mood switches from muscular to meltingly fluid. Wünsche's opening pose, silhouetted in an extreme sculpted shape soon floods with human warmth as her plastic body moves into action. Jones matches her in every detail, partnering with skill and dancing up a storm.

William Forsythe's *New Sleep*, combines the choreographer's love of Dadaesque theatricality and his inimitable out-of-the-box ballet. The trio, Eva Dewaele, Andrei Cozlac and Dominik Slavkovský, perform absurd conjuring tricks with a cane, spheres and squares while taking measure of the space and stock of the universe. All around is cutting edge dance as leaps carve the air with the thrust of flying javelins, extreme legs flick over heads and hips thrust but, in a quiet moment, you may catch the simplicity of a basic temps lié. The lighting is a show in itself, sometimes illuminating the dance and sometimes deciding to play its own game and all the while Thom Willems' dynamic electronic score hovers on the border of the danger zone. The dancers were tremendous, I loved the duets between Viktorina Kapitonova and Cristian Alex Assis and her fierce energy in the brief solos and also Anna Khamzina dancing with Denis Viera.