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# Dublin Dance Festival 2016 'Shostakovich, Rasa' believe the hype

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Shostakovich, Rasa by Alonzo King LINES Ballet  
*Quinnb Wharto*

## Shostakovich, Rasa by Alonzo King LINES Ballet

Rating: ★★★★★

The multi award winning Alonzo King, along with his San Francisco based, LINES Ballet Company, has often been hailed as one of the world's most influential choreographers. Described as visionary, it's claimed King has changed the way we look at ballet over the past thirty four years. On Sunday, May 22nd, Dublin audiences were afforded a glimpse of the master choreographer's work in the form of a double bill performance, "Shostakovich, Rasa" which had its Irish premiere as part of The [Dublin Dance Festival 2016](#). And those present on the night were not disappointed by what proved to be a tour de force performance.

Featuring dancers Babatunji, Robb Beresford, Adji Cissoko, Brett Conway, Madeline DeVries, Shuaib Elhassen, Courtney Henry, Yujin Kim, Michael Montgomery, Laura O'Malley, Jeffrey Van

Sciver and Kara Wilkes, “Shostakovich, Rasa” is a near perfect marriage of form and content, of tradition and innovation, of the classical and the contemporary. With extremes of physical and technical excellence on display, it's unquestionably ballet, yet there's a syntax running throughout of King's own making, one whose design is clean, classical and of the utmost clarity. At its centre lies the body of the dancer, strong and seeming unnaturally long, which Robert Rosenwasser's costume designs are intent on accentuating. If the finished performances appear impressionistic in places, almost casual in others, there's not an ounce of fat nor nothing loose to be found, with movements seemingly calculated to within millimetrical accuracy. A math-a-magical precision performed with such rigour, the intensity is almost palpable.

First performed in 2014, “Shostakovich,” a work built around four of Shostakovich's string quartets, opens like a gently raging snowstorm. With twelve alternating solos swirling and overlapping, dancers walk before erupting into movement, with nothing left to chance. This is followed by a series of the most sublime and moving duets, occasionally overlapping, which are imbued with a visceral ferocity and concentrated intensity. Throughout, there's a sense of yearning and struggle, of wrestling with something larger being channelled through both music and movement, something frightening, heart breaking yet ultimately filled with hope. A section with a staff of light proved momentarily distracting, a curious choice of prop fighting against, rather than working with, the flow of the body. But order was quickly restored and “Shostakovich” finished as it begun, with a flurry of intense beauty.

If “Shostakovich” takes the classical as its jumping off point, “Rasa” first performed in 2007, is steeped in the rich, evocative Indian sound of renowned tabla performer, Zakir Hussain. Once again a discordant soundtrack is at work, but here there's something more primal and raw in evidence. Like “Shostakovich,” “Rasa” too begins with a series of solos, before giving way to a sublime quartet, a sort of pas de deux meets pas de trois meets pas de quatre. Yet, once again, it is the subsequent duet that lingers in the memory, one utterly mesmerising in its power and poignancy, a near perfect realisation of both form and content. A dynamic section, which sees competing male and female energies alternating, gives way to three male dancers who, almost unexpectedly, bring it all home. Like being woken unexpectedly from a deeply pleasurable dream, it suddenly feels like it's over before you know it's begun. All you can do is sit, wishing there was more.

Like rivers seeking out the path of least resistance, both “Shostakovich” and “Rasa” flow as if the paths they respectively take were the only routes possible. Both are built on a sense of balance, of the transfer of energies from body to body about the space, where weight shifts to become weightlessness and a fluidity and flow is achieved that resembles complete naturalness. As if these movements and sequences, and no others, were the only ones possible. Powerful and passionate, “Shostakovich, Rasa” is sublime, sensual and deeply moving. A rare performance less to be seen than experienced. Transcendent.

“Shostakovich, Rasa” by [Alonzo King LINES Ballet](#) ran as part of the Dublin [Dance Festival 2016](#) at The Bord Gáis Theatre on May 22nd

For more information, including information on additional Alonzo King related events, visit [Dublin](#)

## Dance Festival



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