

*Entertainment News*

## Dance review

### **Regina Klenjoski Dance Company**

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*by Laura M. Dennis*

The Torrance-based Regina Klenjoski Dance Company presented “Love Lies Waiting” (2003) along with two new works at the Ford Amphitheatre in Hollywood last Friday.

The 45-minute signature company piece, “Love Lies Waiting” abounds with exuberant, expansive choreography and a message promoting the continuation of love despite obstacles in life and the passage of time.

The dancers included Mauricio Alconedo, Jeff Bulkley, Pamela Debaise, Marissa Labog, Carlos Rodriguez, Rachael Welborn and Klenjoski.

With Klenjoski as the outsider always traversing the stage with suitcase in hand, the three men and three women are variously partnered in high-flying lifts and touching moments of calm familiarity. Virtuoso, presentational group sections are tempered with quick exits that leave two dancers alone to contemplate their love relationship—romantic or friendly.

A program quote by Henry David Thoreau provides apt insight into the need to become passionately and compassionately involved in life: “You must get your living by loving.”

A ten-piece orchestra located onstage accompanied the work. It was an apt position for a composition that guided the piece with captivating and pulsating but lyrical music. The original score was by Torrance-based composer Mark Fitchett.

Local audiences may remember the premiere of “Love Lies Waiting” in March 2003, or seeing a section of it at the SOLA Contemporary Dance Festival last November, both at Torrance’s James Armstrong Theatre. For the latter, Klenjoski was absent, with more important life events: the birth of her son came on the concert’s eve.

Integrating art with life is an artist’s journey—joyous, melancholic, poignant and commonplace are all ingredients for creative output. “Cristian’s Lullaby” was a simply crafted solo inspired by Klenjoski’s journey into new motherhood. Fitchett composed and performed the solo cello accompaniment.

The wistful dance was not overly sentimental. Dressed in a feminine light pink with a wispy scarf skirt, the short, touching piece begins with Klenjoski making unembellished rounded shapes and stroking her belly. By the end, she takes that circular space and expands it into a radiant sweeping of the arms. Her transition from artist to artist-mother has just begun.

Klenjoski's homage to the Cunningham-Cage collaboration can be seen in "Streetscapes," a sleek, futuristic exploration of the city landscape. While Cunningham rarely coordinated his dances with Cage's sounds, Klenjoski worked closely with local musician Drew Schnurr. The resulting sound score rumbles and churns, evoking the stark isolation that accompanies modern post-industrial society.

The six company dancers, costumed in taut white and gold-trimmed body suits, performed the bound, linear choreography with statuesque presence. Klenjoski's choice of compact movement vocabulary is different than "Love Lies Waiting" and "Cristian's Lullaby." The floor patterns traveled by the dancers are geometric—they turn tight corners as if dancing amongst skyscrapers.

In fact, the duet with the petite, agile Marissa Labog jumping onto and climbing over the outsized, resilient Jeff Bulkley demonstrated humans' need to overcome their man-made environment. It was a standout duet mixing social commentary with comical partnering.

Another impressive element was Carlos Rodriguez's expressive solo work set against the cast's everyday shuffling, gesturing and rocking throughout the streets and subways. One of Klenjoski's strong choreographic skills is abstracting such ingredients of city life, distilling them to their essential impersonal disconnectedness. But then she sets in contrast Rodriguez's supple back and strong use of torso contraction to convey an intimate lyrical vulnerability.

Klenjoski begs the question: are we lulled by the rhythm of the city, or molested by it?

A vital contribution to the Los Angeles dance community, the Regina Klenjoski Dance Company has been in residence with the City of Torrance cultural division since 1999.

The fall dance season is almost upon us. Look for the SOLA Contemporary Dance Festival November 12-14, 2004 at the James Armstrong Theatre. Organized by Klenjoski, the concerts provide opportunities for emerging and established choreographers to show work. We may see something new by Klenjoski, or perhaps a taste of the excellent performance last weekend.

