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**"Les Ballets Jazz de Montreal is compelling, surprising"**

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It's a Cinderella story, a musical that is at once compelling and bizarre. Les Ballets Jazz de Montreal presented Harry on a program of four dances when it opened Thursday night at the **Annenberg Center**.

In Barak Marshall's account, it's not a glass slipper that is proffered for the foot that fits it, but a pot in search of its lid. Women line up with covers of all sizes, trying to force them on Harry's crockery, but the special someone holding the right lid must break free from a group forcibly holding her back.

This is just the beginning of a piece about love, death, and war. Harry's funeral is relived in several existential discussions, battles are fought by popping powder-filled balloons and tossing glittery confetti - and dancers speak. The dance is often a series of interconnected poses. One beautiful section has the cast of women telling the story in a series of fluttering hand movements.

It's not for every taste, but Harry is an extravaganza - of humor, jazz, mime, and spoken-word performance set to a score that ranges from Israeli folk songs to the music of Tommy Dorsey and the Andrews Sisters - that won't soon be forgotten.

The first half of the program includes glorious duets and a group dance of the more traditional sort. Two are balletic contemporary pieces that highlight the flexibility and silky-smooth movements of the cerise-haired Celine Cassone, each set to piano music by Philip Glass.

In Zero in On - choreographed by Cayetano Soto - Cassone and Kevin Delaney in subtle beige costumes are music in motion, with movements that are fluid but danced with intention, shadowed motions, lifts, and a series of precise passes.

Closer is from Benjamin Millepied, who choreographed the dance sections of the movie Black Swan (and later married its star, Natalie Portman). It is a series of passionate vignettes between Cassone and Alexander Hille. One section is entirely lifts, with her feet never touching the floor. Another, an intimate love scene, is performed entirely lying on the stage.

Breaking up the gentle movement is Soto's Fuel, set to a score of industrial sounds by Julia Wolfe. Here, among clangs in the music and puffs of fog, the dancers are cogs in a machine that seems to feed a large light structure at the back of the stage.

Les Ballets Jazz de Montreal visits the Annenberg every couple of years, always with strong technical skills and something surprising. Catch it if you can.

Additional performances: 2 and 8 p.m. Saturday, **Annenberg Center** for the Performing Arts, 3680 Walnut St. Tickets: \$20-\$55. Information: 215-898-3900 or [www.annenbergcenter.org](http://www.annenbergcenter.org)

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Previous Story: Cheeky 'THEN' by Susan Rethorst and Group Motion

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***Highlights: Annenberg Center***