

“Sorrow, sensuality, & absence”

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Glistening sweat slides over the cheekbones and down the neck of Diego Carrasco to the swells of the sorrowful Brazilian melodies in Armando Duarte's "Sobre Ausencia" ("About Absence"). Carrasco's muscular body cries from the absence, the longing, as a beautifully dressed female circles him.

This year's Duarte Dance Works, Quatro, blends the abstract portrayals of sorrow and sensuality. The vocabulary of movement in the first piece, "Voce nao sabe como eu te amo" ("You don't know how much I love you") ranges from raw, vulnerable shivers to striking voluptuous movement of the human form that summons visions of liquid smoothness.

Duarte's heart remains on his sleeve for the second piece, "Duo" - originally choreographed in 2002 - which explores the themes of support, acceptance, and rejection. The delicate gestures of the dancers give voice to these emotional themes.

In a quiet moment, dancer Kate Johnson cradles Diego Carrasco. He reaches his hand to touch hers, only to find it absent. This sort of longing dominates this piece, which ends with both dancers lying sideways in the fetal position with their backs to the audience, Johnson stacked on top of Carrasco, perfectly molded to him in a moment of delicate and timid balance.

"For a long time, I thought that absence was the lack of presence," Duarte quotes from the program notes to explain the inspiration for the third piece. The translated Portuguese poem ends with the sentiment that absence is not something to fear. Instead, hold it in your arms. No one can steal it from you.

"Sobre Ausencia" ("About Absence") expands upon the 2003 Duarte Dance Works "La Luna y el Sur," which appears in the middle of the extended piece. Performed this year by UI alumna Nicole Wong and graduate student Daniel Stark, the piece remains quietly beautiful. Wong glows in a wispy white dress under an enormous moon in this passionate piece set to the music of Simon Diaz and Caetano Veloso. It is as if she doesn't exist - she is only a moon beam on the shiny dark floor.

The mood in the theater changes immensely after the intermission. "City Remixed," the last piece, involves 15 dancers and Duarte himself. Duarte collaborated with visual artists Isabel Machado, a Fulbright Fellow filmmaker, and Daniel Wildberger, an M.F.A. candidate in the UI art school. The multimedia collaboration brings together the choreography of Duarte and visual elements inspired by the 2003 Brazilian film City of God.

The longest performance in this year's Duarte Dance Works gives the feeling of a summer street festival. What Duarte describes as a "city symphony" follows the narrative of a neighborhood from sunrise to sunset. This performance has the stage crowded with dancers, building relationships - in a way, a community. Bringing the creation of connections to the mix adds a lighthearted and upbeat ending to this year's powerfully passionate concert.