



Aurélie Cayla and Stefan Zeromski perform in "Wings of Wax," a ballet by Jiri Kylian. The theme is the myth of Icarus.

**DANCE REVIEW** 'Nederlands Dans Theater I' ★★★

# Nederlands Dans works stir imagination

**By Sid Smith**

SPECIAL TO THE TRIBUNE

The three works performed by the Nederlands Dans Theater I this week at the Auditorium Theatre were each challenging, unfathomable, occasionally rambling and indulgent. They also showed off artists eager to reach for the outer limits of the imagination.

"The Second Person," Chicago's first look at the work of Canadian hotshot Crystal Pite, is a 45-minute dance-theater extravaganza, with Kafkaesque themes achieved through arresting design. Pite's

choral finale is one you're unlikely to see elsewhere, neither from a large ballet company or Cirque du Soleil, which both spring to mind. Peopled by two dozen dancers (and the NDT dancers are beyond top-notch), "Person" employs a marionette operated variously by roving gangs or individual dancers, a puppet resembling a Spielberg extraterrestrial, in a kind of Everyman tone poem of societal alienation and robotic servitude—a perplexing saga of stark, inventive movement and hypnotic crowd control.

Jiri Kylian's technically sublime

"Wings of Wax" demonstrated the power of a work by a great choreographer working directly with dancers from his home troupe. We more often see the work of master choreographers restaged, but here was something magical, a performance of scintillating detail, sparkle, full-throttle execution and rich expression. In one section, the men exact a series of showy spins and jumps, typically starting with standard ballet form, moving to an electrifying, utterly modern finish involving the legs, all accomplished within a breathtaking, bravura solo.

Kylian's collaboration with designer Michael Simon is stunning but problematic. The theme is the myth of Icarus, in particular the communal indifference to grand tragedy explored in W.H. Auden's great poem on the topic. Simon's gigantic, ashen tree hangs upside down from the ceiling, with a spotlight that monotonously circles it throughout vying for our attention. Beside contributing to an irksome half-hour interval Tuesday, understandably annoying an otherwise enthusiastic audience, the conceit is sometimes burdensome. Would Kylian's un-

bridled virtuosity be as well or better served by a bare stage?

"Shoot the Moon" by NDT's remarkable husband-and-wife team of Paul Lightfoot and Sol Leon is an intriguing tour de force, achieved by a revolving set piece and clever video enabling looks at the dry, arid, tension-filled state of various couples.

Evoking painters Rene Magritte and Francis Bacon, "Moon" throbs with itchy choreography and uses its set to create sickening moods and clever, super-real puzzles.

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