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## 'The Warriors: A Love Story' – One Point of View

"Bravo for yet another great performance by this talented company—they deserve our support and appreciation"



by Liz Simon

Liz Simon is a photographer, writer and cyclist who likes to combine the three in her quest to discover the nooks and crannies of New Mexico. Sometimes, means of transportation other than bicycle are employed—including the Rail Runner and motorcycle.

Last night I attended a performance by ARCOS Dance and Eliot Gray Fisher, which was based upon an interpretation of the book, "The Warriors, A Love Story" by J. Glenn Gray, Fisher's grandfather. The book attempts to "make sense" of the horrors which his grandfather witnessed during the Second World War. The audience is privileged to "meet" Mr. Gray, played by Justin Golding, and his wife Ursula, played by Karen Leigh. Ursula witnessed and survived the Allied bombing of Dresden. Like Hamburg and other German cities, it was the aerial bombing and the ensuing firestorm(s) which created the most horror, havoc and appalling loss of life.



Through the masterful use of video, still photography and air-raid sirens, we are given the mere tiniest of glimpses of the attack—and that was enough to bring my heart rate up and start the adrenalin flowing. Of course the performance was about much more. This is a story which is not told often enough. As someone once said, the victors write the history, and this history has been sadly neglected, at least in my experience. We hear and see, through Ursula, one person's experience of this sublime horror. It's been roughly 67 years since the end of World War II and there is still healing and greater awareness needed in all of our psyches. One cannot help but feel enormous compassion for the German people who were subjected to those raids. And it is now impossible to stand up proudly and say "We did it for God and country." It was an unGodly act, and that is one of the points made in the book.....that the "highs" and the "lows" of human conduct are in overdrive...exploring the extremes...in these ghastly conflicts which we refer to as war.

The choreography by Curtis Uhlemann and Erica Gionfriddo and the wonderfully talented company of dancers were the perfect counterpoint to the visuals and music. I cannot say that one was one ascendent over the other. Instead they all blended perfectly, coming to life as one complete entity.

Through the words of actor Karen Leigh, who played the part of Ursula, we are asked if this paroxysm of insanity can be prevented. Sadly, but probably fairly typically, I expected her to say "No." I was instead relieved to hear her clear-voiced assertion of "Yes". I then tensed up in rapt attention to hear the answer which has remained so elusive and so exceedingly difficult for humankind to fathom. The answer she says, in essence, begins with how we speak to our children at the dinner table, with the words we use to define and depict "others"—and with the emotional content which we bestow upon those words. On the individual level is where the work must begin.

For me, however, even more poignant and universal in its message, was Fisher's willingness to share his quest of his deceased grandparents....to share his intense longing to know them and to touch them as real human beings. This yearning to transcend time and space, to reach out to those no longer "here", and to feel the way closed, is universal. I felt the pain (yet also the ultimate victory) of that quest, that reach, as acutely as I did the interpretations of the war. Our limited understanding, or perception, of time and space is something which stymies, confounds and often saddens all of us. Perhaps that is a modern phenomenon, perhaps not. In any event, in my opinion, Fisher has dealt with it magnificently. Through his sharing this deeply personal story, and interpreting it with such artistic and musical grace, we all come to recognize much of ourselves in "the other". And maybe that was the intent, we are pushed to this realization through his grandparents' words, AND through his very touching and personal quest of discovery.

I think it is impossible to see this performance and not feel moved by it. Justin Golding as Eliot's grandfather gave a wonderfully sensitive performance. This role could have easily descended into the maudlin, but instead became translucent and, at times, transcendent. And I would give the same laudits to Leigh.

Bravo for yet another great performance by this talented company—they deserve our support and appreciation.

*"The Warriors: A Love Story" continues running through the weekend of February 15, 2013.*