

Garth Fagan Dance is awash in inspiration, as sea-creatures bustle and lovers tryst

Robert Johnson/The Star-Ledger By **Robert Johnson/The Star-Ledger**

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Last season, in Garth Fagan's "Lighthouse/Lightning Rod," an electrifying dance as expansive as the ocean it portrays, the waves seemed to part and bustling sea creatures made way for a trio of human lovers bristling with jealousy.

"Lighthouse" is back this year in excerpts, and through Sunday viewers can let Fagan's inspiration wash over them, along with Wynton Marsalis' voluptuous score, as **Garth Fagan Dance** commands the stage of the Joyce Theater.

"Lighthouse" contains many delicate and wondrous things—a viewer can swoon, waiting for a dancer's foot to brush the floor as a trickily balanced phrase unfolds. Yet there is drama, too.

At one point in the trio, Vitolio Jeune scoops up Natalie Rogers and, tenderly embracing, they try to escape from a watchful Nicolette Depass. Jeune and Rogers are not typical refugees. At 31, he's the company's resident meteor, and she's a 50-plus seasoned trouper. Yet Fagan isn't interested in romantic clichés, preferring to suggest life's complications and surprises. Now, to showcase Rogers' skill in maturity, he has expanded that fleeting moment in the trio. She reunites with Jeune in the rapturous duet that constitutes the second part of "No Evidence of Failure," a season premiere to music by Monty Alexander.

First, we meet Rogers alone. She's one of those brave souls who drift across Fagan landscapes with open hearts. Does her character have regrets? You wouldn't know it from her rock-solid placement and plunging lines, or from fast sections in which Fagan choreographs a one-woman commotion.

When she rests her head on her arm, with one leg jutting firmly into space, she seems as self-sufficient as a little bird napping upon a branch. Is she waiting for someone? At times she pauses to look toward the



Norwood Pennewell in Garth Fagan's 'Prelude: Discipline is Freedom'

Greg Barrett

Garth Fagan Dance

Where: Joyce Theater, 175 Eighth Ave. at 19th Street, New York

When: Friday and Saturday at 8 p.m. and Sunday at 7:30 p.m., with matinees Saturday and Sunday at 2 p.m.

How much: \$10 to \$69; call (212) 242-0800 or visit joyce.org.

corner, peering cautiously over her arm.

As if by chance, Jeune appears in another part of the stage; and though his presence wasn't required, Rogers is glad to see him. The young man is tense with crackling energy. Yet with her he's gentle, and when he wraps his hand around Rogers' waist, she melts. She leans back against his raised leg, in an interlocking figure that suggests the many layers of such attachments, and her hand traces circles appreciatively on his chest.

These are narrative suggestions, yet Fagan's work is also sensuous at its most abstract. "Prelude: Discipline Is Freedom," which opens this first program, is grandly virtuosic. Yet at the same time a man's shifting torso or a woman's curving hip reveal that Fagan takes a connoisseur's interest in the body's particulars.

That level of detail is still missing from "Gin," a second season premiere by emerging choreographer and company star Norwood Pennewell, who otherwise has taken great strides in adapting this company's idiom to forge his own, looser style. Haunted individuals emerge from amid gnashing patterns, and Pennewell creates lovely moments for a talented cast that includes Roderick Calloway, Shannon Castle and Charity Metzger.

In a duet for Depass and Wynton Rice, the characters share an intimate space without losing their independence. That freedom—a company hallmark—makes it all the more exciting when two people connect.

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