



Now in its 24th season, it's difficult to think of [Doug Varone and Dancers](#) as a young upstart company. But this month alone many established modern companies are coincidentally having engagements in New York. They include—in order of longevity—Martha Graham, Merce Cunningham, Trisha Brown, and Mark Morris. Toss in Paul Taylor's recent run at City Center, and those are some impressive years, collectively. Varone's premiere, *Chapters from a Broken Novel* (through this weekend) includes elements that lend a fresh snap to this established artist's grounded, muscular, expressionistic choreography, performed to a score by David Van Tieghem, who contributes percussion live.

The most immediately striking element is the set by Andrew Lieberman—a simple sheet of silky white fabric, suspended from two pipes, draped over the stage. Lit from above, it becomes a luminous cloud that transforms the Joyce Theater. The pipes raise and lower to form a shed, or to compress the space. The titles of each section are projected onto it, pacing the 75-minute work and providing food for thought. Varone culled the subtitles from various sources—conversations, films, books—often poetic: "The Ghosts of Insects," "Erased by Degrees," "Ruby Throated Sparrows." Others are more descriptive: "Target Practice," in which Alex Springer dodges a chasing spotlight; "Funeral;" and "Tile Riot" (Erin Owen lets loose in a make-believe bathroom, revealing a sweet humor not always associated with Varone's penchant of examining the human condition). In tension with this highly literate sense, Varone's choreography is one of the most visceral and emotional styles around, a sort of connective tissue between pathos and literature. His dancers have conversations using movement, but it's the thoughtful mediation of gut feelings that position it as a very human, pre-verbal means of communication.

One storyline threads throughout the evening—the relationship between Natalie Desch and Eddie Taketa. In different chapters we see them together, being wrenchingly separated, mourning, and uniting as group dynamics shift around them. Desch is powerful, super pliant, and projects movements into infinity. Taketa is elegant, lyrical, and cat quick. Their bond goes a long way toward binding together the disparate scenes, as does Van Tieghem's propulsive, often filmic score. The company also includes Julia Burrer, Ryan Corrison, and Netta Yerushalmy, all accomplished in different ways.

## 8 Responses to "Doug Varone and Dancers' Broken Novel"

1. *JaneJS* says:

[March 18, 2011 at 10:14 am](#)

Thank you for this clear take of Doug Varone's latest masterpiece after the unwarranted thrashing of his work in the New York Times. His choreography is indeed "one of the most visceral and emotional styles around" and deserves the support of NYC's dance world.

2. *ELF* says:

[March 18, 2011 at 10:35 am](#)

Upon your wise and informed reviews, I am going!

3. *Nancy Salmon* says:

[March 18, 2011 at 11:56 am](#)

My friends and I are so looking forward to Chapters having seen it in the raw at Bates Dance Festival last summer and parts of it, completed, at Portland Ovarions last month in Portland, ME. I, too, appreciate this more balanced review.

4. *Janis Brenner* says:

[March 18, 2011 at 3:49 pm](#)

Yes, Susan. Thank you.

5. *Robert* says:

[March 18, 2011 at 5:15 pm](#)

A beautiful evening of rich work with a corps of dancers who consistently amaze with their range, strength, sensitivity and courage. Re: the New York Times review: overheard in The Joyce Theatre lobby: "The New York Times has made itself irrelevant to dance."

6. *Alice Teirstein* says:

[March 18, 2011 at 6:19 pm](#)

Thank you Doug, Natalie, Eddie and all for exhilarating, pulsing, truthful, revealing choreography and dancing.

7. *vks* says:

[March 21, 2011 at 3:13 pm](#)

After having seen both the 92St Y worksop "Stripped" and "Chapters from a Broken Novel" performed Friday night at the Joyce, I read the NYTimes review expecting to read of the riveting performance. Stunned understates my reaction and realization how shamefully ignorant the reviewer is of dance. It certainly disqualifies NYTimes and renders themselves illegitimate arts critics. There is too little space here to clarify the integrity and the emotionally vitality of the choreography and dancers, whose artistry and intelligence astounded the audience.

8. *BrendanBenFeeney* says:

[March 21, 2011 at 8:42 pm](#)

"Chapters From A Broken Novel" is a must read.....I mean see. What a stunning performance at the Joyce. I was captivated by the emotion, vitality, and unique movements of this seasoned dance company. Your review does justice to what I witnessed in Row H, seat 1. "Chapters" is a magnificent work performed by dancers who anticipate each other's moves with grace and precision. You are on the "stage mark" with this review, SundayArts! Brendan Ben Feeney, Visual Artist. Educator. Champion of the Arts.

<http://www.thirteen.org/sundayarts/blog/doug-varone-and-dancers-broken-novel/1113/>