



The ecstasy and the agony

Doug Varone rings emotional changes

Doug Varone choreographs musicals, opera, film and fashion shows. He's made dances for companies around the world.



All this experience gleams onstage at the Joyce, where his exquisite ensemble performs to music by Philip Glass, Steve Reich and Reynaldo Hahn. Dressed by Liz Prince in clothing that teases the eye while enhancing the movement, Varone's work displays both virtuosity and powerful human feeling.

The tallest performer, Julia Burrer, is a marvel of speed and flexibility. The smallest, Eddie Taketa, concentrates Varone's choreographic intentions, making ideas visible. In between are muscular men who move delicately and slim women who slice the air. The 9-year-old "Tomorrow," to live music for piano and soprano, opens the program with just the right note of focused devotion.

The 2006 "Lux" is at once intensely theatrical and intensely personal. Eight dancers in dark, floaty garments accented with pale blue share the

stage with a stealthily rising moon. Speed and energy unite this population, riding the rhythms of Glass' "The Light" to an ecstatic peak.

"Alchemy," Varone's new work, brings us back to earth, confronting eight people imprisoned behind a stone wall. Jane Cox's lighting shows us a dungeon. A portrait of desperation leavened with hope, "Alchemy" is performed to Steve Reich's "Daniel Variations," melding text from the Book of Daniel with the words of murdered journalist Daniel Pearl. But words register less than the physicality of bodies confined against their will, praying, writing on the air. "Lux" shows us the ecstasy of humans freed to fly; "Alchemy" reveals the agony of those denied the light.

Doug Varone and Dancers

Through Sunday

Joyce Theater

175 Eighth Ave.

\$19-\$49, 212-242-0800

► www.joyce.org

Elizabeth Zimmer

Photo © Phil Knott