

# Financial Times

ARTS & WEEKEND

## Music & Theatre

### Doug Varone and Dancers Joyce Theater, New York

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Propelled by Prokofiev's whirling *Waltz Suite* Op.110, based on his *Cinderella* score, the nine dancers in *Castles*, choreographed in 2004, surge across the stage with almost superhuman energy, driven compulsively by the music and Varone's demanding choreography.

The pace never lets up in this, one of his most accomplished works for a company now celebrating its 20th anniversary.

Unlike some one-track modern dance choreographers Varone has cast his choreographic net widely, setting the dances for and even directing operas, arranging movement for shows on and off Broadway, films and TV, including choreographing *The Planets* for an ice-skating spectacular.

His primary devotion, however, is to his dancers, whom he uses in all his work.

In *Lux*, a world premiere to Philip Glass's *The Light*, it's as if he's bidding farewell to his peak performing days as a dancer. He does so within the context of being the troupe's leader.

Alone at first, he circles lazily, flings out an arm, swings into a step or two. Eddie Taketa joins him. The music picks up and as more dancers enter Varone is the ringmaster, manipulating them but not fully participating.

The dancers swoop in and in his highly honed, individualistic style of non-stop movement roll on the floor and recover in one fluid motion.

As the piece gathers momentum a moon-like disc ascends behind them. Varone moves casually among the dancers. He exits to reappear later and stand alone contemplating the moon.

*Boats Leaving*, which preceded *Lux*, has a static, tableau look. Set to Arvo Pärt's *Te Deum*, it suggests farewells as dancers swirl away from their tight-knit groups.

Varone, a photography enthusiast, has imparted a picture style to this work that is essentially abstract.

If at 50 he feels he must pause to reassess, he can be content that he has forged a dance vernacular and company uniquely his own.