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Rubberbandance Group, a delight to dazzle audiences

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Sophie Jama, anthropologist and journalist

(photo: Marie-Noël Pilon)

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Choreographer Victor Quijada, the founder of Rubberbandance Group, is not one to set limits to his artistic ambitions – on the contrary. And the ten members of his troupe of incredibly talented young dancers do justice to his exuberant creativity, joined by two musicians playing live and a lighting designer whose work constitutes the entire decor of the magnificent spectacle, *Ever So Slightly*, presented by Danse Danse.

Ever So Slightly seems to evoke the relationships human beings have with themselves, with others, and with the world they live in. These relationships have high and low points and can be gentle or violent, cooperative or conflictual. Changes for the better are possible, but these generally occur at a snail's pace, ever so slightly . . . The ballet incites us to follow the narrative thread and allows multiple interpretations. But the emotion comes above all from the perfect execution of the choreographic sequences set to music that ranges widely on a broad spectrum from classical to rock.

By a judicious blend of street dance, Hip Hop, classical ballet, and contemporary dance, with even a few circus acrobatics added in – the whole delicately and harmoniously combined – , the movements, executed with dexterity and elegance and at times almost in slow motion, create perfectly coordinated moments that shift gradually and subtly, magnificent duets, fight scenes, and friendly reconciliations, all to music that does not specifically accompany the artists, but which is created purposefully and interpreted on the spot.

The two musicians are placed on the right side of the stage while the dancers appear and disappear in accordance with the changing lighting – raking, blinding, then soft. At the beginning, the dancers' costumes, in warm tones with a touch of blue, look like workers' outfits. They mutate into accessories and masks, obscuring individuality, and disappear, like an offering, just before a lighter kind of life seems to be finally permitted, bringing a social, friendly dance. There is also an important dramatic development, which, while giving free play to spectators' imaginations, reaches a tragic climax a quarter of an hour before the curtain falls, with the end itself sounding a light, optimistic, even joyous note.

Ever So Slightly is totally successful contemporary ballet, a very rich work, and undoubtedly very challenging for the incredibly talented dancers, who communicate the pleasure they have in giving their all and even surpassing their limits, exhibiting remarkable virtuosity; a ballet of great beauty, packed with emotion.

Ever So Slightly, Rubberbandance Group, December 5 to 8, 2018, at Théâtre Maisonneuve, Montreal