



SULLE LABBRA TUE DOLICISSIME (FRANCESCA SELVA DANCE COMPANY)

Review ratings at a glance:

★★★★: *Three Weeks, Edinburgh Guide, The Skinny*

★★★: *Broadway Baby, Fringe Biscuit, Scotsman, The List, Herald*

Stars not issued: The Stage – MUST SEE

Published reviews:

***Broadway Baby* ★★★**

In a grey, raining world, five dancers flail through space trying to enliven it with their toddler-bright candy-colored clothing. But the attempt is futile. Black and white eventually wins out, and the rain never stops. In Francesca Selva's *On Your Honey Lips*, the struggle, and failure, to find meaning in life is explored with athletic-yet-remote choreography set against a video projection backdrop.

Selva's dancers are technically excellent and convey this difficult material with precision. But the choreography keeps the audience at an emotional distance, and it is difficult to feel included in the piece. The five roles have equal weight and come across as a general multiplication of the human experience as we stumble through our desires and disappointments. The vibrant colors and full-force choreography in the first section contrast with the performers' indifferent attitude. They poke and push each other's bodies in a childlike exploration as if half-heartedly asking 'What does this do?' Later, when the costumes change to black and white, the dancers at times pair off for a bit of a snog, listlessly making out for a moment and seeming to ignore the rest of the company. But these kisses are passionless and the pairings are fickle. The impression is that of adults stuck in immature behavior, and vainly waiting for "something" to happen. It is a potent contradiction, that of the space-devouring, sometimes mellifluous, sometimes ragged movement, and then hollowness of its delivery.

When expressing "the existential malaise," as the show's translated program explains, it is a delicate problem to consider the audience's attention span. Selva keeps the same structure for most of the nearly hour-long work, with her five dancers almost always in two partnering or unison pairs, and one free-floater on the stage. The result is a kind-of eye fatigue that makes it difficult to stay engaged with the dance. One's mind wanders; one can even feel bored. But Selva's interest is "the daily grind veiled by an outward happiness" and in that light it seems the resulting boredom is intentional. The video contribution is another tricky question. The monotonous, over-exposed, slow-motion footage of rain, a pigeon, and upside-down water drops functions as simply a white background for the dancers. The content is not dynamic or discernible enough to do more than set a mood, and the final image of a man standing naked in a bathtub has such a fictional charge it is incongruous to the rest of the video, and to the show as a whole. Overall the projection feels unrelated to the live bodies on stage.

On Your Honey Lips is a complicated, ambitious work, developed on a challenging premise. While some may be turned off by its removed disposition, others may find excitement in its talented performers and subtle structure. Fans of contemporary dance should check it out and see for themselves.

<http://www.broadwaybaby.com/listing.php?id=15305>

Fringe Biscuit ★★★

Precise dance and physical theatre explores reliance. I think. Meaning perhaps lost in translation.

Three Weeks ★★★★★

How apt that a performance in Edinburgh should begin with rain? During this video/dance performance, the inside and outside worlds collide around the theme of alienation. With a rainbow of colours, the dancers paint the bleak stage with movement while behind them a screen flickers with images: a pigeon, a naked man in a bath. Movements become wilder, and the energy precipitates throughout the theatre until the dancers collapse and you feel your breath synchronising with theirs in a moment of total absorption. The unnatural appears innate in the bodies of these top class dancers. They caress and repel one another, there is anger, fear and sympathy. It is a piece which will leave you both perplexed and amazed.

<http://www.threeweeks.co.uk/article/ed2012-physical-review-sulle-labbra-tue-dolcissime-on-your-honey-lips-francesca-selvas-dance-company-florence-for-fringe/>



The Stage

The Italian title translates as "on your honey lips", taking inspiration for its subject from Antonio Pietrangeli's 1965 *Io la Conoscevo Bene* (I Know Her Well), a bittersweet film about a country girl who goes to the big city and fails to fit in. This inventive piece from Siena's Francesca Selva Company documents that loneliness of being in a crowd and the grin-and-bear-it attitude society demands, while Selva's flowing forms will either engage or infuriate thanks to their refusal to repeat a motif, no matter how catchy. Either way, this is essential viewing.

Garbed in bright everyday clothes, three women and two men work their way through the social interactions of day and night. The odd number becomes significant when they split into couples, working through each combination but always leaving one out, an imbalance reinforced when they fuse finally into groups without reconciling that sense of exclusion.

Ballet, modern dance and even a flash of hip hop mesh fluidly over a series of discrete but interlinked pieces. The energy is such that every paused dancer, every unfilled space onstage breathes movement. A standout is the complex duet set to Antony and the Johnsons' plaintive *Thank You for Your Love*, although the later metronome solo is out of context – intentional, no doubt, but it jars. Magically, the final piece reunites the couples of the beginning, yet the dynamic now takes on a different resonance and styles flow into each other.

It is a strange point to note about this sort of company, but Selva's dancers actually act their characters throughout, particularly with their eyes, unfazed by the fact that the narrative is abstract.

As a stand-alone work, Giovanni Mezzedimi's near static video would be tedious, but projected on to the huge backdrop it majestically contrasts with the human rhythms it frames, merged with a lyrical, often strident soundtrack and the show-long falling rain/white noise ostinato.

<http://ed.thestage.co.uk/reviews/1483>

Edinburgh Guide ★★★★★

Dance is undoubtedly a universal language. It doesn't matter who or where or from what culture the dancers come from, movement, gesture, shape all speak directly to us and this show has a lot to tell us.

There are five dancers and they are on stage virtually the whole time. It is apparent from the beginning to the end the depth of their talent and commitment to their art.

The stage at Zoo Southside was made for this kind of performance, wide, deep, tall a perfect framing for an explosion of physical exposition and interpretation. The presence and strength of these dancers is phenomenal and their exploration of the tedium of life and our attempts to hide our real feelings a masterclass in dance.

The expression of emotion is completely accessible and the choice of costumes adds to the immediate impact of this piece.

The relationship between the music which is varied and constantly changing and the back projection is sometimes difficult to follow, but the dancers act as a constant theme tying the whole piece together.

For anyone who enjoys dance this should be one of your top shows to go and see this year at the Fringe.

<http://www.edinburghguide.com/festival/2012/edinburghfringe/sullelabbratuedolcissimeonyourhoneylipsreview-11096>

Scotsman ★★ ★

This colourful and frenetic work from Italy's Francesca Selva Dance Company promises to "reveal the daily grind veiled by outward happiness". Which, to an extent, it does.

At first, the dancers fill the space with large, expansive movement. Spinning wildly, they are like children at play, climbing over each other, or rolling along the floor as if it were a grassy hilltop.

As time passes, a new emotion kicks in, bringing with it a shift energy. This is not necessarily a good thing. A pile of bread is inexplicably ripped up; a dancer moves into the spotlight, but there's too much action elsewhere to make him the focal point.

When the dancers come together in brief moments of unison, the show really comes alive, amid some smashing musical choices. But it is the general lack of focus that makes *Sulle Labra Tue Dolcissime* less than it could be. It's them and us- and we're very much on the outside.

The List ★★ ★

This intriguing piece from Siena-based Francesca Selva Company is a bit of a slow burner. But stick with it and it will reap delicious visual rewards.

Starting with the image of a dove -- part of Giovanni Mezzedimi's multimedia collaboration with the show -- a white noise soundtrack emerges, over which comes a changing score of moods. Baroque music signifies an elegant lean tone to the dance, a French cafe waltz leads to spinning piggy backs, and soft indie tunes see the ensemble fall in and out of duet pairings with different partners.

It is these brief couplings that are the most compelling to watch, the movement drawing them together as if they ache for each other. At times a lone dancer provides counterpoint, exploring gangly and awkward angles with their legs, or crouched down, head lolling.

Costumes of bold block colour that look like splashes on an artist's palette are slowly peeled off as the piece progresses. By the time the final episode comes around the dancers, now in monochrome, have developed a languorous quality that is almost intoxicating.

<http://edinburghfestival.list.co.uk/article/44367-sulle-labbra-tue-dolcissime-on-your-honey-lips/>

The Skinny ★★ ★★

On Your Honey Lips opens with the video projection of the staccato movement of a dove and ends with the eroding action of dripping water. Then with their wonderfully vital energy and prowess, the young dancers of Compagnia Francesca Selva take us on a journey through existence.

Their strength and grace communicates more about the determination and spirit of humanity, rather than human frailty in relation to physical objects, which is the stated theme of the piece. The passion and striving of the performers affirms the intense colours and solid shapes of life, rather than its ephemeral nature and daily troubles.

The choreography is original; gestures and movements mutate and change before they become clichéd. The Siena based company won the Florence Fringe competition with this piece. This UK debut deserves to be seen primarily for the impressive quality of the dancing and choreography.

http://www.theskinny.co.uk/theatre/edinburgh_festivals_2012/302646-on_your_honey_lips_zoo

Herald ★★★

Sulle labbra tue dolcissime translates romantically as on your honey lips, but with five dancers – two men, three women – there is always going to be an odd one out, even when the flow of movement is making an ensemble image of everyday routines.

A soundscape where water becomes a recurring motif, mistily echoed by video fragments of a shoreline, lends a wistfully poetic feel to choreography that itself carries threads of unresolved longings within brisk to-ings and fro-ings. Even the nuances of costuming, the layering and the colours, feed into a mood of split lives: the ones we have, and the ones we wish we had. Complex ideas are, however, woven into some beautifully delivered dance – this is a lovely, effortlessly accomplished company to watch.