

In review: dance at the 2019 Chutzpah! Festival



The Chutzpah! Festival is known for bringing world-renowned contemporary dance to Vancouver, and this year was no exception. Companies from Toronto, Italy, and Vancouver presented compelling works.

MM Contemporary Dance | *Schubert Frames*, *Gershwin Suite*

Italy's MM Contemporary Dance returned to Chutzpah! after last year's hit performance of *Bolero* and *The Rite of Spring*. This year, they presented two works that showed off not only the technical skill of individual dancers, but also the playful personality of the whole company.

Enrico Morelli's *Schubert Frames* begins with the dancers standing on a piece of billowing white fabric, what at first resembles a parachute. They pulse, jump, and undulate as the white fabric begins to inflate into a ballooning cloud. Moving in canon, with heavy use of backs and arms, the choreography beautifully interpreted the music. The balloon rose up above the stage and the dancers carried on in a stirring sequence of synchronized group work before coming back to their cluster formation, this time under the white orb instead of standing on it.

In contrast to the serious, contemplative tone of *Schubert Frames*, Michele Merola's *Gershwin Suite* is a playful, cinematic piece complete with shimmying, jazz hands, and gold confetti. The piece opened with a flashing bar of white light at one side of the stage pulsing in time to the upbeat big band music. After the flashy, ebullient opening, the piece continued through a series of scenes inspired by the artwork of Edward Hopper. Recognizable were a sad clown from *Soir Bleu*, sunbathers of *People in the Sun*, and a scene in a cinema from *New York Movie*. The canvases came to life in a brilliant homage to the American realist.