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## Review

### **Shobana Jeyasingh Company, Classic Cuts**

#### **Linbury Studio Theatre, London**

13-17 March 2012

- Dr. Mark Hamilton

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For the first time reviewing, I am inspired to write a tribute to one dancer. I forego a balanced analysis of an evening's work, and a turn-taking resume of each artist's endeavours. Shobana Jeyasingh's Configurations is brilliant choreography - sharp factors, clear material, spacious setting...precise and cut. Yet, it is the way in which Sooraj Subramaniam fills the liquid gestures, bursts into each leap, and sustains an ineffable calm that makes this piece into a dance. His is a stellar solo performance, within a group composition. Having seen Subramaniam perform classical items at King's Place earlier this year, it is an especial delight to see him carry the same composure into this neo-(?)classical composition. One adjustment in Subramaniam's performance would give me full joy. Might he let the rush of emotion, implicit in his dynamic action, register in his face? I ask not for face-pulling, but an abandonment of the blank mask.

I understand Jeyasingh's well crafted escape from the sentimental gloss that cloys in many renderings of Indian dance. I find no joy, however, when she jettisons the percussive footwork that is the foundation of the sub-continent's dance traditions. This evening's double bill opened with her newest work 'Dev Kahan Hai?' It is complex and sophisticated, but lacks guts and grace. Was I born too late? Seeing Configurations, first staged in 1988, I realised that that long-past decade was an era when Chandralekha's revision of dance in India found echoes in the work of comparable choreographers the world over. Yet now, twenty years on, it seems the meeting of the Great Tradition and the possibilities of a modern sensibility has reached an over-tipped balance. I yearn for Jeyasingh to create again in the vein of Configurations. It is 'a new departure in Indian dance,' not (like the evening's opening) 'an Indian departure in new dance.'

It must be said, these are the words of a man who turned from the cold gestures and empty figures that dominate Western experimentation in dance. Call me an Orientalist, if you will, but giving shape to the spirit still seems to me a vital calling. Those technologies of movement that permit it must be sustained - though they may fall far from vogue.

**Dr. Mark James Hamilton trained at the University of Birmingham (UK) and with classical Indian dancer Priya Srikumar in Edinburgh. Mark has worked as a director-choreographer, scriptwriter and creative producer for stage and television and researches the integration of voice and movement training. Dr. Hamilton is an affiliate of a number of academic and artistic professional bodies like Asian Performing Arts Network, Dance Base (Scottish National Centre for Dance), The Voice Studio International (UK); New Zealand Studies Network, New Zealand South Asia Centre and Mika Haka Foundation (NZ); CVN Kalari East Fort Thiruvananthapuram & Samudra Performing Arts (Kerala, India).**

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