

**The week in dance: Trisha Brown Dance Company & Noé Soulier: Working Title & In the Fall; Osipova/Linbury - review**

★★★★☆



‘Limpidly beautiful’: New York’s Trisha Brown Dance Company perform *In the Fall* by Noé Soulier. Photograph: Tristram Kenton/the Guardian

**Sadler’s Wells; Linbury theatre, Royal Opera House, London**

The late choreographer’s company perform her vibrant 1985 work with a modern-day homage. Plus, a triple bill with a twist from Natalia Osipova

**T**rying to see the past through contemporary eyes is one of the great challenges of dance. It’s particularly difficult with the works of the great American pioneers of the postmodern period, the group who gathered at Judson church in New York and transformed everyday movement into abstract art: Yvonne Rainer, Steve Paxton, Lucinda Childs and Trisha Brown.

Watching films of their endeavours from the 1960s onwards, their radicalism is clear, but today it’s sometimes hard to discern the gleam of inspiration, the absolute conviction that made them so influential. Now the enterprising Van Cleef & Arpels festival *Dance Reflections*, which is filling London with a huge variety of dance until 8 April, offers a chance to do just that.

Brown died in 2017, but her company have continued, and on a single bill they perform two works. One, *Working Title*, has been slightly adapted from Brown’s 1985 choreography; the other, *In the Fall* (2023), is by French dance-maker Noé Soulier. Both are limpidly beautiful and performed with grace and poise by eight exceptional dancers.

Osipova runs, turning, jumping and falling with freedom and a haunted expression that beautifully conjures Isadora Duncan

Yet it’s Brown’s piece, which sets them running and turning across the stage like excitable children finding their feet, that has all the vitality. Accompanied by music by Peter Zummo that floats in and out, and with lighting by Beverly Emmons that pastes the floor with subtle strips of colour, *Working Title* has a jazzy sensibility that seems to run through every body, as repetitive steps and minute calibrations of movement build a scene of constant motion.

Its energetic jumps and loose arms have a sense of continual inventiveness. In Soulier’s *In the Fall*, the experimentation is more overt. This tribute to Brown plays with the falling body, creating geometrically extended shapes, but it feels like an academic exercise rather than a voyage of discovery.

The Russian ballerina Natalia Osipova has based her career on exploration as she leaves behind the bravura classical roles with which she made her name. In her latest offering for the Royal Ballet, she assumes the mantle of two female groundbreakers and then adds a twist all of her own. In *Errand into the Maze* (1947), she invokes Martha Graham’s choreography as the female battler who must suppress her own fear as she encounters Marcelino Sambé’s Minotaur. Osipova lends the stylised steps both ferocity and shaded emotion; she captures the joy of triumph as well as terror.

Yet her intelligence comes to life more strongly in the other two pieces. In *Five Brahms Waltzes in the Manner of Isadora Duncan* (1976), choreographed by Frederick Ashton as a memory of a dancer who inspired him, and beautifully filmed by Grigory Dobrygin (the film is screened halfway through the show), Osipova runs in peach chiffon, turning, jumping and falling with freedom and a haunted expression that beautifully conjures Duncan.

*The Exhibition*, a new work by the Norwegian Jo Strømngren, is a piece of comic dance theatre in which two strangers (Osipova and the expressive Christopher Akkrill) meet in an art gallery. She talks voluble Russian; he’s annoyed. But gradually her needling presence unlocks something in him, in a developing relationship shown in fluid movement and clever words. It’s gentle but rewarding, a perfect vehicle for Osipova’s vivid dramatic talent.

Star ratings (out of five)

*Working Title & In the Fall* ★★★★★

*Osipova/Linbury* ★★★★★