

# The New York Times

Dance Review

## At Jacob's Pillow Festival, the Dance as Cinema

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BECKET, Mass., July 14 — The three dances presented by the Tania Pérez-Salas Compañía de Danza on Thursday night at the Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival in the Berkshires were drawn partly from the ideas of the writers Michael Cunningham, Octavio Paz and Ivan Illich. But it is tempting to imagine that an even greater influence was the childhood performing in films, television and the theater that preceded Ms. Pérez-Salas's dance training.



Nancy Palmieri for The New York Times

Three dancers share a single costume in “The Hours,” inspired by the Michael Cunningham novel and rendered in filmic quality by the choreographer Tania Pérez-Salas, whose company is based in Mexico City.

Her choreography is rooted in the clean line and attack of classical ballet, as is the dancing of her fine 10-member troupe, based in Mexico City. But the dances stood out most for their intense theatricality and for Ms. Pérez-Salas's evident delight in entertaining her audiences.

There is also a filmic quality to all three pieces, which unfold in brief episodes on a dark stage. She has a vivid visual imagination comparable to that of Boris Eifman, and seems also to have been influenced by the style of Cirque du Soleil. But there is an intimacy to her choreography that makes it very much her own.

In “The Hours,” which takes its title from the novel by Mr. Cunningham, Ms. Pérez-Salas sets the atmosphere from the start, when a large, pinwheel-like object made of partly glimpsed human forms appears to move as if suspended in space, a favorite device of Ms. Pérez-Salas. She then cuts to a woman in an ivory-colored dress with a huge spreading skirt.

The woman’s arms snake seductively above her, but the size of the skirt keeps her from moving otherwise. The eye is then drawn to three women in smaller hoop skirts attached as one dress, limiting somewhat each dancer’s autonomy. After some relatively nondescript pure-dance choreography — the weakest part of the pieces — five women wind themselves into thick ropes cascading from above.

Being female is hell, the message might seem to be, but not with Ms. Pérez-Salas, whose art is more suggestive than doctrinaire. Stylish black-and-white projections by Gustavo Lara Equihua and Antonio Riestra add to the overall texture of “The Hours.”

“Anabiosis,” drawn from essays on love and eroticism by Paz, opens with clusters of dancers writhing in bars of light, looking as if they have been placed onstage for the audience to discover by chance. They move a little like robots or video game figures in the passage at the center of the piece, but become believably and touchingly human in the evening’s most interesting choreography, which juxtaposes three couples as well as their moments of clinging partnering; simple, shadowy walking; and stillness. From time to time the piece cuts to floating images; the first appears to be an erotic goddess, and the next two, lovers.

“The Hours” and “Anabiosis” are set to collages of music as diverse as Vivaldi, Lully and cheekier contemporary pieces, like the rollicking score by Tykwer, Klimek and Heil that opens “Anabiosis.”

“Waters of Forgetfulness,” set to music by Arvo Pärt and M. Danna and influenced by Illich essays, deposits its six dancers on a stage full of water, through which they scuff and slice their bodies to create huge arcs of spray. At the end the men and women move through sheets of fine sand pouring down at the front of the stage. Watching the shapes they make to send the sand flying is interesting for a while. But eventually I wondered what Ms. Pérez-Salas would do without props and special effects, however magical.