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A Rite Members of the Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company and SITI in this production, marking the centenary year of the tumultuous 1913 premiere of "The Rite of Spring," at the Brooklyn Academy of Music.

When Parisians Stormed Out, and the Earth Trembled

By this point in the centennial year of "The Rite of Spring," you've probably heard the story about the riot.

Paris, 1913: the curtain rises on the latest production from Serge Diaghilev's stylish Ballets Russes, and within moments of the ballet's eerie opening notes, the whispering and jeering begins. Stravinsky's harsh, dissonant score; Nijinsky's convulsive, earthbound choreography; the premise of a virginal sacrifice: for an audience used to ballet as fairy tale, in a city on the brink of World War I, it's too much to handle. A protest ensues, spilling into the streets. The scandal goes down in history.

Of course, there are many versions of

that story, none of them definitive — except for the going-down-in-history part. Our mythologizing fascination with that night persists, most recently in the form of "A Rite," an ambitious new collaboration between the Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company and the SITI Company, the theater troupe directed by Anne Bogart. The work, roughly an hour long, had its New York City premiere on Thursday at the Brooklyn Academy of Music's Howard Gilman Opera House as part of the Next Wave festival.

Unlike many "Rites," this is more

"A Rite" runs through Saturday at the Howard Gilman Opera House, Brooklyn Academy of Music, 30 Lafayette Avenue, at Ashland Place, Fort Greene; bam.org.

than a choreographic rendering of Stravinsky. It wrestles not only with the score itself, in all its strange, strident, startling intricacy, but with the cultural moment of its inception, the lore surrounding its premiere, its endurance, the very notion of time's passage, the slippery dance between how something happened and how we remember it.

In a program note, Ms. Bogart discusses what and she and her co-creators, Mr. Jones and Janet Wong, were going for: "How do we create a rite for our modern world, informed by the legacy of the original but containing the complexities and paradoxes of our own times?"

That's a tall order, and one that, in fleetingly imaginative bursts, these companies — seamlessly integrated

into one tumultuous dance-theater tribe — follow through on.

Stravinsky, as we learn from the chaty, schoolmarmish musicologist played by Ellen Lauren, began composing "Rite" with those infamous pounding chords in the middle section. Fittingly, "A Rite" launches straight into riotous dancing. As the the fiercely committed cast emerges from shadow into Robert Wierzel's moody lighting, their collective advance fractures into a lashing, swirling morass.

A recurring motif, this maelstrom periodically resolves into a militant march, heralding the work's central figure: a veteran (Will Bond) haunted as much by images of war as by Stravinsky's sometimes soothing, sometimes virulent cacophony. It's hard to tell

where music ends and lived experience begins.

"A Rite" draws its musings on time and existence from writings by the physicist Brian Greene and the Japanese poet Shuntaro Tanikawa, among other sources. But its philosophizing feels thin, cloying and force-fed compared with its rousing physical embodiments of the score: a hooting, stomping, clapping rendition toward the beginning, an a cappella version at the end. More of those, please.

At times it's tempting to dismiss this work as heavy-handed. But when a car alarm sounds on your walk home from the theater, and you instantly confuse it with Stravinsky, you feel that the minds behind this modern "Rite" are onto something.

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**DANCE
REVIEW**