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Photo: Molly Bartels

The Look of Love by Mark Morris delights at Penn Live Arts

by Courtney Colón

In late Spring, Penn Live Arts presented *The Look of Love* by Mark Morris, a delightfully sweet and punchy evening of modern dance set to the well-known pop songs of the late, great [Burt Bacharach](#). This sunny 60-minute piece was choreographed to 14 songs crooned out silky-smooth by Broadway singer [Marcy Harriell](#). *The Look of Love* according to Morris is packaged in brightly colored, approachable wrapping that exudes joy and playfulness. Morris has historically described himself as “a musician whose medium is dance,” and this pairing of choreographer and composer makes sense. Both their works can appear deceptively simple at times, but they are built on a sturdy and resonant foundation of musicality.

Everything about this work is visually delectable. Frequent Morris collaborator and fashion icon [Isaac Mizrahi](#) outfitted the dancers in sweet, bright pops of neon color that any Barbie would find a home in. Mizrahi also did the set design, a grouping of candy-colored chairs with matching cushions. Lighting design by Nicole Pearce popped up in amber yellows and rich reds and blues, with the dancing a mixture of carefree and technical.

The Look of Love is a pure ensemble, which tracks with Morris. His collective has no soloists, housing instead dancers as humans, with diverse physical types performing equal-opportunity in gender-neutral costumes. Blending choreography seamlessly with music, Morris transforms simple movement phrases into intricate designs. This is best demonstrated in *Walk on By*. Here,

as might be expected, we see plenty of walking. But Morris takes the pedestrian into the stratosphere with his shifting patterns, dancers in perpetual motion meticulously synchronized surrounding a singular central chair.

In *Raindrops Keep Falling on My Head*, we see Morris' playfulness. Dancers jump in imaginary puddles, shield themselves with seat cushions, and simply stop, look to the heavens, and open their mouths for a bit of rain. Everything is effective in its simplicity. In *Message to Michael*, two couples take off across the stage in soft lifts as a group sits in the background, listening aptly as one dancer mouths the lyrics as if in a sermon.

The Look of Love was the perfect work to see on a bright and sunny late Spring day. Quick, breezy, and a pure pleasure celebrating some of the most iconic pop songs ever recorded. More than a tribute piece, Morris guided the audience through the ups and downs of romantic love. It did not challenge or subvert, nor was it meant to, instead it served as a refreshing bit of entertainment that left the audience with big smiles on their faces as they exited the venue.

The Look of Love, Mark Morris Dance Group, Penn Live Arts Zellerbach Theatre, May 31 and June 1.

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