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REVIEW

*Jazz Dance Company**'Echoes of Ellington – A Tribute',
'Bronte'**July 2006**London, Peacock**by Ian Palmer*

Perhaps more than any other contemporary dance form, jazz is the most musical. It takes the music as stimulus and manifests it as visual image on the stage. Watching Dollie Henry's brilliant *Echoes of Ellington – A Tribute*, I found myself recalling Jackson Pollock's *Summertime* (which can be seen as part of Tate Modern's wonderful new re-hang) and thinking how similar their responses to the music are: Pollock with his canvas and his paint, dripping it along as reaction to the inner energy of the jazz he so loved and Henry with her stage and her dancers, ravelling and unravelling them as reply to the Duke's most glorious tunes

It is an absolute cracker of a piece, exploring the kaleidoscope of the Duke's artistry, from his Big Band roots, to the later more intimate works. We see the ensemble, legs-a-kicking, alertly musical and devastatingly slick, zipping away to one of the Duke's big band numbers; a young dancer, Hannah Toy, seducing us with her arms (I suppose it could be called her *port de bras*) to a sleazy little number; another dancer, Cleopatra Joseph, (lady in red), hands in prayer, mourning in long, expansive Graham-esque movements, her leg fixed to a central axis; a *Pas de Deux* for Cat Lane and Chris Penfold, who use the off-beat as a spring-board to launch into spins and jumps and finally end in that touching little arm-in-arm walk, so beloved of Ashton (think the opening of the *Awakening Pas de Deux*, or the final walk over to the chair in *Two Pigeons*) and which seems to express the simplest of love; and an ensemble finale, shoulders forward, fingers clicking, all embracing and the height of cool. It is all danced with such integrity, conviction and stylistic unity.