



The Warriors: A Love Story, Arcos Dance
 Center for Contemporary Arts, Feb. 9

Lovers and fighters

Less than 60 seconds after entering the Muñoz Waxman Gallery, where Arcos Dance is staging its multimedia production *The Warriors: A Love Story*, you recognize that you are about to experience something much more complex than a slice of bare-bones community theater.

The Warriors is based on the lives of J. Glenn Gray and Ursula Gray, Arcos multimedia director Eliot Gray Fisher's maternal grandparents. The work explores the couple's courtship and perseverance over the course of generations, beginning around the time of the Allied bombing of Dresden during World War II.

Fisher, who serves as primary scriptwriter, videographer, and composer, collaborates with Arcos choreographers Erica Gionfriddo and Curtis Uhlemann to present a near-seamless production that blends live music, dance, video projection, and theater in a performance setting that, under the command of less dedicated creative visionaries, might have been too cold and sterile to draw an audience in.

White wooden furnishings adorned with retractable screens make for a seemingly sparse setting, but once the video projections, carefully considered lighting, and sounds kick in, the audience is transported to another time and place. The crux of the story rests on Fisher's desire to honor his grandparents — a former army intelligence officer and philosopher, and a modern dancer — in song. Throughout the production, Fisher, playing himself, struggles to reconcile the ravages of war with the profound love and affection that defined his grandparents' relationship.

Justin Golding as J. Glenn Gray follows a fairly straight line with his character, displaying a stoic, pensive nobility that finally rises to the emotional occasion when he stares down his soldiering self in the mirror. It's a mind-bending marriage and mirage of video and live performance.

Karen Leigh shines as Ursula Gray, entirely consuming the role and delivering the production's most inspired dialogue. The sounds and sights of a city ashen and ablaze, and the fear and uncertainty that accompany such horror come to life in Leigh's performance, aided by Fisher's well-researched writing.

Seven of Arcos' finest honor Ursula's past as a dancer. But the well-costumed ensemble does much more than that. Throughout the piece, they triumphantly relay the scourge of warfare as well as the human capacity for love using every surface available to them on the stage, including the walls.

While some dancers stand out as younger versions of the main characters (the only male dancer, Arcos veteran Wes Jansen, is in top form while abstractly referencing a much younger J. Glenn Gray), the ensemble as a whole ties the theatrical and visual elements of *The Warriors* together with subtlety and grace.

Fisher and company took a big risk combining classical performance modes with the unpredictability of multimedia live theater. It's worth noting, then, that the people onstage performed better than the equipment. Technology enhances both creation and destruction, but they're impossible without the imperfect touch of man, who currently holds both art and war to the same level of inspiration. *The Warriors* strongly and passionately suggests that we can do without one of them.

— Rob DeWalt

"The Warriors: A Love Story" continues 7:30 p.m. Friday and Saturday, Feb. 15 and 16, and 2 p.m. Sunday, Feb. 17, at the Center for Contemporary Arts, 1050 Old Pecos Trail. Tickets are \$20, students \$15; call 473-7434 or email info@arcosdance for reservations.