



NEWSNOTES DANCE BLOG **MARK KAPPEL, EDITOR**

DIARY

Working Women at the Joyce Theater

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Joyce Theater

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The Gotham Arts Exchange has been in the forefront of pooling resources to make it possible for small modern dance and ballet companies to be able to present performances in New York. On February 1, 2013, the Gotham Arts Exchange presented a themed program entitled Working Women at the Joyce Theater which focused on works created by female choreographers -- choreographers who are expressing themselves in the modern dance idiom. Although these choreographers were working in the same dance idiom, they all offered diversity in their ideas and forms of expression.

Framing the program was Monica Bill Barnes' Luster -- danced by Barnes and Anna Bass. The first part of Luster begins with a video of Barnes and Bass carrying a proscenium arch through the streets of New York making their way to the backstage area of the Joyce Theater -- and making their entrance in person on the Joyce Theater stage. After setting up the proscenium and adding lights and props, Barnes and Bass proceed to dancing and to moving to Ike and Tina Turner's rendition of "Proud Mary". They were prepared to provide everything needed for a performance as their props appeared out of shopping bags -- from sequined dresses, to make-up, and roses already thrown up on the stage for their bows. Bookending the performance was the second part of Luster performed at the end of this program which was danced to music by Lionel Richie -- in front of a video screen showing road vistas as these dancers took their act on the road with wit and humor.

Jane Comfort's Untitled was a pure dance piece. Its choreographic focal point was a male dancer crawling across the back of the stage with a light in his mouth to guide his journey. Light is the metaphor in Untitled as in the final moments of the piece, the male dancer is then surrounded by other dancers with lights in hand.

Janis Brenner's solo, Contents May Have Shifted is a choreographic riff on the gypsy life of a dancer -- travelling on planes. Framed by LED lights circumscribing an airport runway, Holley Farmer navigated the metaphoric runway emphasizing the angular and incisive movement that Brenner created. Mitchell Bogard's set and lighting designs illuminated Brenner's choreographic images. Farmer brought much of herself to this piece -- making it her own. Farmer's performance was one of the virtuoso performances on this program.

Loni Landon's Rebuilding Sandcastles was a response to the damage from Hurricane Sandy. The piece explored relationships as they evolve through the best of times and the worst of times -- emotional connections -- focusing on a man who punctuates the piece as he exits the stage -- all alone.

Carolyn Dorfman's duet, Keystone, delved into the high points of a relationship. A perfect choreographic metaphor for Dorfman's point of view was dancers giving the illusion of creating snow angels on the stage danced to the musical soundtrack of a quirky recording of White Christmas. Jacqueline Dumas Albert and Louie Marin contributed much to relating Dorfman's intent.

Kate Weare's The Light Has Not The Arms To Carry Us was ambiguous in nature but intriguing. One of the world premieres presented on this program, this piece was colored by the effortless performances of the dancers, Douglas Gillespie, Leslie Kraus, T.J. Spaur, and Bergen Wheeler.

Another world premiere on this program, Sidra Bell's Beyond The Edge of the Frame, for Bodytraffic, reflected an urban scene -- urban dwellers seeking out relationships -- life on the edge. The immediacy in Bell's choreography grabbed one's attention and the collaborative effort by the dancers enhanced the piece's effectiveness.

Camille A. Brown created a showcase for her own virtuoso performance in her solo, Real Cool, from a larger work, Mr. Tol E. RAnCE. Set to a jazz interpretation of What A Wonderful World, the piece explores the past images of the black minstrel shows including theatrical conventions of the past and how they still remain with us in the present.

Not all of the world premieres are fully realized pieces and will be developed by their choreographers as they evolve. Combined as a whole there is a pool of talented female choreographers who have much to express and this was an opportunity for these choreographers to communicate to an attentive audience.

However I look forward to the day when such showcases won't be needed and that female choreographers can be referred to as choreographers and their work would be fully integrated into the repertoires of modern dance and ballet companies.