



NEWSNOTES DANCE BLOG

Janis Brenner Celebrates Five Decades of Dance

Joyce Soho

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By Mark Kappel

Choreographer Janis Brenner and her company celebrated Janis Brenner's volume of work in a retrospective program at the Joyce Soho in New York on November 12, 2009. However this performance was not merely a survey of Janis Brenner's work as a dancer, choreographer, singer, and actress.

A former soloist of the Murray Louis Dance Company, a prolific choreographer in her own right, and director of her own company, Janis Brenner's career has been focused on creating thought-provoking work. She has also achieved a reputation as a solo performer and interpreter of other choreographers' work.

Brenner's choreography not only possesses keen introspection but also spans a range of emotions injected with a tinge of satire and humor. However the most important aspect of Brenner's work is her artistic integrity.

As a performer Brenner made Meredith Monk's quirky solo, Break, her very own, as did Kyla Barkin dancing Brenner's solo, Guilt. Also included in this program were solos from Murray Louis' Figura, for which Brenner and Robert Small coached dancers Aaron Selissen and Sumaya Jackson, in a work Brenner danced as a soloist with the Murray Louis Dance Company.

And in contrast was Brenner's heartfelt examination of relationships, A Matter of Time -- relationships both good and bad -- dramatically portrayed by the cast of Kyla Barkin, Moo Kim, Aaron Selissen, and Pam Wagner.

What's more Brenner's work tugs at the heartstrings -- touching every audience member, especially Brenner's world premiere, Dancing In Absentia.

Inspired by the many artists lost to the AIDS epidemic, remembrances were reflected in video of photos of the great artists we have lost and plaintive vocal music which mourned these artists. Kyla Barkin, Sumaya Jackson, Moo Kim, Carolyn Rossett, Aaron Selissen, Pam Wagner, Janis Brenner, and Michelle Rosen communicated this haunting theme not only in the execution of Brenner's choreography but also in generating all of the emotions that are evoked when contemplating such losses.

And then there is Mitchell Bogard's beautiful lighting!