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Janis Brenner in "Under Renovation"

JANIS BRENNER
& DANCERS:
UNDER RENOVATION

REVIEWED BY

By **LISA JO SAGOLLA**

Janis Brenner's choreography brings a refreshingly positive energy to today's "Downtown" dance scene, which is often governed by an aggressive aesthetic that repels or confounds, rather than embraces, its audience. In Brenner's dances, presented by Danspace Project at St. Mark's Church, choreographic form is always apparent -- there is logical flow to the movements and geometric clarity in the floor patterns. Instead of deconstructing the elements of choreography, Brenner builds dances upon a

solid core of formal and emotional stability that affects viewers much like a good Yoga class: One comes away feeling kinesthetically well organized, relaxed, and rejuvenated. Even in "A Matter of Time" -- a dance about struggling couples in troubled relationships -- no destructive anger ever emerges.

"What About Bob" opens with what feels like a Baroque court dance composed of contemporary vocabulary; the dancers roll their shoulders, stomp, twirl, drop, and round over, in orderly, straight-lined synchronization. The piece evolves into a series of well-danced duet, featuring innovative, tender partnering between Brenner and **Luis Tentindo**, and impressive side-by-side unison work by Tentindo and **Kun-Yang Lin**. In the preview of "heart

STRINGS," Brenner, again, showed her formal strengths as a choreographer, most notably at the end, when the dancers disperse and move individually as if improvising; one glimpses similar movement fragments shared amongst the group and recognizes Brenner's presence, tying them together with -- not a tight string -- but the soft hold of a silky ribbon of choreographic design.

The program also included Brenner's comic "Solo for Janis" (choreographed by **Richard Siegal** in collaboration with Brenner), which parodies all the clichés of "bad" performing; and "On the Rim of Thought," danced by guest artist **Kate Johnson**, a former principal with the Paul Taylor Company. Johnson feels every shape, breath, gesture, and extension with tremendous intensity. Her movements penetrate into the deepest recesses of her body; when she rests on her knee and arches her spine backwards one feels as if her internal organs are somehow opening and stretching inside her bones and muscles. Johnson commits completely to the choreography, using every particle of her physicality to fully experience what it means to dance.

Presented by Danspace Project, at St. Mark's Church, 131 E. 10th St., NYC, June 11-14.

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