

BACK STAGE

February 6, 2004

REVIEWS • Dance

Rebecca Stenn/ PerksDanceMusic- Theatre

Reviewed by Phyllis Goldman

Self-presented as part of Altogether Different 2004 at the Joyce Theater, 175 Eighth Ave., NYC, Jan. 7-11.

Rebecca Stenn, thy name is woman, and a handsome one indeed. With slicked short bob and an aerobics-trainer body, she exerted an electrifying presence the minute she appeared onstage. In collaboration with her company of dancers and musicians, she mounted five dance pieces and two musical interludes under the umbrella title "PerksDanceMusicTheatre."

Stenn moves like a gazelle, and out of her musclebound stance, she exudes a melodic beauty, whether wafting through the air in pink chiffon in "Zimzum" or clomping on stage in Li'l Abner boots as a fiery seductress in "The Carmen Suites."

Her choreographic imagination showed boundless versatility, beginning with the opening piece, the premiere of "Left of Fall," with music "based on Stravinsky." Lights come up on two women, slung over their partners' shoulders and hanging limply, like rag dolls. The electrical sound equipment in evidence behind the dancers prepared us for the possibility of a string-plucking score, the kind that can often prove nearly unlistenable. But not with Stenn and associate Jay Weissman in charge; their music was a daring and delightful accompaniment to the choreography.



Rebecca Stenn

The impression here is that the male dancers are not, no matter what, going to let these dames succeed, progress, be free. They will be caged in, herded off into darkness, forbidden, perhaps sacrificed. Stenn has encapsulated the "Rites" story and twisted it into a compelling choreographic piece.

In "Ocean," folds of soft fabric were stretched across the stage, pulled and rippled by kneeling dancers on either side, emulating waves. Stenn rode the crest of the fabric, revealing then concealing her topless body in a heroic manner as she cavorted in the waves. "Ocean" is an object lesson on how to use nudity tastefully in dance.

Stenn closed with "The Carmen Suites," a fevered interpretation of the classic story. Poor Don José had to resort to a cello bow to stab his soldier and begin his doomed exile. There was plenty of wit and charm in this one.