

On The Dance Insider Online Directory

Brought to you by

Body Wrappers



the New York manufacturer of fine dance apparel for women and girls. Click here to see a sample of our products and a list of web sites for purchasing. With Body Wrappers it's always *performance at its best.*

More Flash Reviews Go Home

Flash Review Journal, 11-23: The Journey Home
Proto-Synthesis from Stenn & in the Bronx

By Chris Dohse
Copyright 2005 Chris Dohse

NEW YORK -- As I watch Rebecca Stenn's new "Blue Print," November 10 at Danspace Project at St. Mark's Church, I find myself projecting memories of other dances on it. I know this isn't the best way to evaluate the real thing that is happening in front of me in real time. But Stenn (who has contributed to this publication) shares thematic concerns and an attention to nuance that remind me of things I know intimately, that I've danced myself. A whole line of humanist dancemakers and friends of mine have tested these waters: Marta Renzi, Nancy Havlik, Kathy Wildberger, Sean Curran. Because I remember these dances in my body, it's easy to enter the skin of Stenn's intimate peopling.

A sense of community is immediately clear. A collection of visually polyglot bodies -- short and tall, male and female, racially diverse, trained and "nondancers" -- crowd into a circle midstage. A man in his skivvies joins this group; as he collapses repeatedly into their arms he is dressed by them. Others begin to ready the stage for a tale to be told, a playing field ringed by wooden chairs and sculptural elements, designed by Jodi Kaplan, that suggest buildings.

Elizabeth Marvel recites excerpts from T. S. Eliot's "The Four Quartets" in voiceover. I have trouble connecting Eliot's text to what I see happening. This isn't exactly an easy jumble of words to digest. A phrase that gets repeated often enough to resonate is "Home is where one starts from"; this nicely complements a later recording of the cast's voices finishing the phrase "I am from" Jay Weissman, Dave Eggar and Tom

Photo Album
The Martha Graham
Dance Company
by Julia Lemberger



click!

DANSPACE PROJECT

Performance
Schedule



Dance at The Kitchen



www.thekitchen.org

Don't get
lost on the
Internet

Chiu's score for cello, electric bass guitar and violin is dark and full of moods; its recorded and live elements cascade over each other.

My usual complaint lately: I wish the dancers would slow down and let me see them, just be instead of doing so much. The part of my mind that reads dances wants to savor each word on the page, not gobble paragraphs in a rush to the ending. The men squabble at one point; I can't tell why. Probably something in the text set this up and I missed it. Stenn has a wide reach in movement invention: she can toss off full-throttle physicality as easily as the gestural or pedestrian, character-driven interactions that much of this piece is built from. Recognizable phrasework that could be a technique class exercise is less successful -- meaning it doesn't serve the evolution of the characters -- than moments of caretaking, simple acts like carrying chairs or performers watching each other from the edges of the space. The way the dancers carry their bodies is too perfect somehow, too well aligned, their faces too composed, to accurately portray the dramatic narrative Stenn intends. These bodies work best when in abstract action, like during a quartet near the middle of the piece where characterization falls away and flesh blurs in pure physics and rebound, jumping, falling and getting up as urgent and necessary acts. Eliot's haggle with the passing of time in this seminal poem calls for flawed people, bodies that reflect apology and compromise. He (the voice of Marvel) talks about love at one point, making me wonder if he had converted to Catholicism yet, if he means eros or agape.

Stenn is known for the way she inserts live music and musicians into her dancing, and this creates remarkable moments, visually and physically. A duet for dancer Eric Jackson Bradley and cellist Eggar is unlike anything I've seen. It's a trio really, two men and a cello. The men's ebb and flow, weight exchanges with each other and the instrument that seems almost to play itself at times, or to initiate the movement, are impeccably timed.