thINKingDANCE
Upping the ante on dance coverage and conversation



Photo: Pedro Greig

Dazzle-Me Daring

by Amelia Estrada

While audience members shuffle to their seats, chattering with each other, Circa company members enter the stage. Undressing, meticulously folding their clothing, occasionally putting on a black translucent t-shirt and exiting: an exercise in performing the ordinary. Each performer adds their own flare: kicking off a shoe, undressing another person, hopping out of a pair of pants until the seemingly mundane act takes a slow turn toward comical.

Once the houselights dim, the performers immediately shift away from the pedestrian toward the spectacular. When I watch a circus company, I expect to see gravity defying feats; the first few flips are still always the most breathtaking. A male soloist claps, effortlessly back tucks, claps, flips twice, smacks his thighs and tucks multiple times in a row, producing an audible gasp from the audience.

The company tests the limits of counterbalancing, shoulder-standing, and bending though a series of solos, duets and ensemble pieces. I am most taken by the moments of awkward beauty. Clutching the blond braid of another female performer, two of the women launch into a duet of attachment. The women tumble across the stage twisting, plunging in and out of the floor, and lifting each other all while still joined hand to braid.

A humorous dance of elbow licking makes me giggle as the performers highlight the one feat they cannot achieve: touching one's own tongue to elbow. A groovy, sexy, playful duet to James Brown's *Please, Please, Please* charmingly incorporates the performers' physical skill, theatricality and musicality.

Humans dazzles the audience. The title describes all the individuals in the room but the physical skill of the Circa's company members far surpass and defy the movement abilities of most people. Watching bodies spring through the air, tumble across the marley, balance atop each other's heads, and tangle limbs into unthinkable shapes reminds me of my own physicality, and how much further I could

push myself. At a certain point, however, watching the performers execute tricks shifts from breathtaking to expected. I revel in the moments where the spectacle of their physical abilities become part of a narrative as opposed to the main event.

Humans, Circa, Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts, Sept. 28-29 https://fringearts.com/event/humans/

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