

thINKIngDANCE

Upping the ante on dance coverage and conversation



Photo: stb x at

Looks Like Sounds Like, a Study in Contrasts—and Perception

by Darcy Grabenstein

Sean Thomas Boyt and Dr. Andy Thierauf are the artists behind stb x at. Boyt is the movement, Thierauf the music. Together, they created *Looks Like Sounds Like* for the 2020 virtual Fringe Festival

Low lighting shrouds the stage, casting eerie shadows on both the dancer and the drum set. The sinewy Boyt appears in a strappy, flowing dress with fringed accents. Carrying out the fringe theme, a banner of shiny silver tinsel spills from drum to floor, encircling the kit like a blingy necklace.

This number is a study in contrasts. Movement vs. stillness. Sound vs. silence. Boyt's flailing, seemingly nonchalant arm movements contrast Thierauf's controlled, measured strikes with the sticks. Boyt's body is a contrast, too: The fluidity in their upper torso, their head moving like a bobblehead in slow motion, is in marked contrast to the often angular motions of their legs, kicking out at right angles, feet flexed.

In what may be an homage to a background in ballet, Boyt tosses in two demi pliés in first position. This nod to traditional dance provides yet another contrast in what is anything but a traditional performance.

Thierauf is as diverse and creative with sound as Boyt is with style. He produces a smorgasbord of sounds with different objects and techniques: scratching the drum head (which may leave you scratching your own), tapping with drumsticks, slowly drawing a violin bow, and more.

A few notes about the video format: The camera at times focuses on the dancer or the drummer, choosing the focal point for you. While you may be tempted to fast-forward to another section of the video, don't. Watch it from start to finish, as you would at a live, in-person performance. I suggest you stream the video to a large screen for full effect and also recommend using headphones. In my case, a noisy air conditioner made it difficult to pick up sound nuances. The video is also available with voiced-over audio descriptions, provided by Kat Sullivan*, for accessibility.

One benefit of the virtual format: It *looks like* I'll get to watch the entire production again in order to absorb it all.

*Kat Sullivan is a writer for thINKingDANCE

[Looks Like Sounds Like](#), stb x at, 2020 Fringe Festival, Sept. 10–Oct. 4.

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