

thINKingDANCE

Upping the ante on dance coverage and conversation



Photo: Steve Pacek

Distanced, But Not Far

by Whitney Weinstein

Steve Pacek's *I Hear A Distant Song* opens with historical artwork of past pandemics. Skeletons dance with royalty, an impoverished mother weeps, scientists in masks examine test tubes. Intermixed, a woman exhaustively attempts to paint a canvas.

Set in the year 2022, our “new normal” of 2020 exists as the “typical normal.” In the setting of a virtual coffeehouse, we meet George, a musician who facilitates the group, and Stephanie, the aforementioned painter who quietly finds inspiration from others’ creative interpretations of the world. Her challenges in producing artwork are apparent in her resistance to share her own creative expressions.

Now on a date, Stephanie carries virtual George into her painting studio, which, admittedly, is not typical. She confesses, “You don’t seem like a stranger,” intimacy made easier with a screen as barrier. He thanks her for “inviting me in.” It is a tender moment that, in the flesh, would have probably enticed their first kiss.

They cultivate an affinity towards one another. Snapshots of their shared time montage: they split Oreos, toast with wine, paint and sing. She even takes her makeup off, exposing herself to a different kind of vulnerability.

They engage in the closest thing to pillow talk as they can get. George speaks freely, “What if we are the virus and this is Mother Earth’s immune system kicking into overdrive? We’re microscopic,” yet somehow “clogging the system” and attacking each other. We’re being “locked down” to stop our, as Stephanie agrees, “destructive interference.” George reflects, “We might be the problem, but we can also be the solution.”

A split screen makes their independent activities seem like they're occurring as shared moments in real time. Though physically distant, the video reflects their feelings of closeness, as if daydreaming in synchrony, devising reciprocated fulfillment in an unexpected type of relationship.

I Hear A Distant Song advocates relating to others by bridging our realities and, further, highlights the essentiality of hope. The current struggle to create art that reflects the world is as massive as our need for it. Today's art, whether like George's music or Stephanie's paintings, is comparable to the images flashed at the start of the performance. In a boundless pursuit to create meaning, it provides an opportunity to process our turmoils and communicate our responses. In a life that is constantly documented, we continue to scavenge for deeper understandings of ourselves and each other within a greater context.

At the end of their encounter, the sun rises outside a window, a reminder of the light emerging from darkness after kindled contact.

I Hear A Distant Song, [Steve Pacek](#), September 29-30, October 1-4, 2020 Fringe Festival.

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