

thINKingDANCE

Upping the ante on dance coverage and conversation



Photo: Meg Foley

Inaugurating JUXT[a]POSE!

By Amelia Longo

The start of the new *JUXT[a]POSE!* series, presented by Second Saturdays at Studio 34, was an impressive line-up of dances by choreographers who have been working on the scene for 8 to 10 years – in the words of Wilson (aka Marcel Williams Foster), the evening's host, "Not emerging artists, but artists who are . . . fierce." This mixed bill, curated by Jaamil Kosoko, was striking in how nicely the different work all fit together, as well as in its cohesive feel through smooth transitions.

When I entered Studio 34, the performance had already begun with an ensemble called An Unknown Group trailing themselves down and across the walls inside and outside of the studio performance space. As the audience chatter died down, I realized how nice it was to have a transition into show-time, which overcame my apprehension about having missed something perhaps crucial. I also realized that the performers included musicians on saxophone, accordion, and drums, who at times blended roles with the dancers. Both dancers and musicians skidded against the walls and floors, squeaking bouncy balls on sticks along with them. Their "Untitled" introduced themes – such as improvisation and the interplay of sound and movement – that would continue throughout the evening.

Next, Jillian Harris Farrell and Scott McPheeters blazed across the floor in Farrell's "Bob and June," an off-kilter piece that echoed 1930s social dance (helped along by Irving Berlin music), with seamless partnering. Eschewing a more traditional stance, Farrell and McPheeters connected via braced forearms between foreheads, and Farrell frequently attempted to punch an unfazed McPheeters, eventually succeeding in knocking him out without even making contact. It felt zesty, unexpected, and yet precise. By the time both dancers collapsed on the floor, I found myself hoping for more.

Jessica Morgan, visiting from New York, performed "Her and Her," an entrancing duet with Adele Loux-Turner. They entered in black bras and underwear, helped one another into red tanks and shorts, and then swooped in unison -- reflections of one another. I was

intrigued by the idea of two performers facing each other for nearly the entire piece, as well as the idea of becoming more dressed over time, but the concepts were more interesting than their execution.

Within moments, Jung Woong Kim's "Ingredients" created a haunting, exploratory atmosphere. Kim, Michele Tantoco, and Morgan Andrews interacted less with one another than with the dozens of plastic bottles filled with various noise-making ingredients (rocks? sand?), scraping them along a wall, lining them up on a window sill, strewing them across the floor. When the dancers did interact, it was confrontational, a battle for dominance of the absurd: who gets to spin in circles, who gets to lie on the floor. Kim made precise and dramatic use of lighting emanating from a hallway and window, a particularly impressive effect in the sparse studio setting.

Meg Foley followed, calling out a few lighting cues throughout her "auxiliary studies, with and without you." Technical director Zachary Svoboda announced seemingly random times from behind the audience, and Foley spoke in short occasional quips. Her use of off-hand spoken remarks (a "thank you" to Svoboda, an exasperated "oh god") drew my attention to the thinking, not just moving, dancer, although they also felt frustratingly like asides. These reflections on time and mundane state-of-mind combined with Foley's slow, awkward poses created a palpable sense of quiet isolation and state of waiting.

At the end of the performance, DJ Rucyl Mill set up for a dance party. Wilson's witty interludes guided along this satisfying evening of strong performing artists. Despite Kosoko's noted absence at its inauguration, *JUXT[a]POSE!* is a welcome addition to the vibrant showcase series present in the city.

JUXT[a]POSE! presented by Second Saturdays at Studio 34, April 14, 2012. Second Saturdays occurs each month, *JUXT[a]POSE!* returns next on October 13, 2012.

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