

thINKIngDANCE

Upping the ante on dance coverage and conversation



Photo: Alexander Izilaev

Come Together

by Lisa Bardarson

Ronen Koresh, Artistic Director and Founder of Koresh Dance Company and his brother, Alon Koresh, Executive Director, have a laudable vision that extends beyond the boundaries of their 21 year old company and school. It's called *Come Together* and it's an ambitious new 11-day festival that features 27 companies and independent choreographers from the greater Philadelphia area. The festival grew out of Koresh's bi-monthly showcase and it lets less-experienced dance artists rub up against more established names like Rennie Harris PureMovement (RHAW), Kun-Yang Lin/Dancers and Koresh Dance Company. On the night I went, these local ringers bookended the evening's newbies giving dance audiences a chance to glimpse both better known and up and coming companies.

The evening opened with Rennie Harris PureMovement (RHAW) in *Brother* and *El Barrio*, two contiguous works that showcased deft use of hip-hop to stunning effect. His dancers displayed the skill and bravado necessary to pull off the tricky athleticism of this genre. Groupings of dancers created dynamic counterpoints to one another through the engaging use of space. Moments of polished unison showed how breathtaking it is when dancers, movement and music work as one.

Next on the bill was the newly formed BalletFleming. The transition from the raw energy of hip-hop to the refinement of classical ballet was jarring and highlighted the inexperience of BalletFleming. Most noticeable were unison sections that lacked the requisite precision to achieve unity. This new company showed promise but needed stronger direction in guiding the dancers on attack and spatial clarity.

Putty Dance Project showed off the work of husband and wife collaborators, trombonist/composer Brent White and dancer/choreographer, Lauren Putty White. *Walls Between Words*, a dance for three women and one man (Putty White, LaMia Dingle, Christina Myers and Lyron Paulin), included the live music of White with drummer Wayne Smith. The dance begins with an antagonistic duet between Putty White and Paulin. The petite Putty White packs a punch and she knows how to move big. It was hard to take my eyes off of her. Paulin's longer lines were pleasingly clean and the duet drew me into their kinesthetic conversation. Another duet and

quartet followed that fused elements of hip-hop, Horton and post-modern. White's live combo was creatively and satisfyingly layered with recorded music, and helped make this piece one of the most successful on the program. I look forward to following Putty Dance Project.

Kun-Yang-Lin/Dancers presented an excerpt of *ONE-immortal game*. The dance began as three women fiercely manipulated three boxes while forcefully reciting a single-syllable word. The movement they used to move around or reposition their boxes was as sharp and severe as their unique hairstyles. They attacked the movement as though they had something to win or claim. In another section a man wore a graceful garment with one, long flowing sleeve. The sleeve arced and swirled with his fluid movement. In this dance, costuming and choreography played against gender stereotype.

Closing the evening was Koresh's *Bolero*. Most people are familiar with this famous work of Ravel's and recognize the repetitive, building theme with its signature crescendo. This composition accumulates via a steady tempo over a span of about fifteen minutes. The stage was starkly lit creating a circus-like effect. The talented, well-rehearsed dancers moved in a clunky, homo-lateral style, and I felt I was watching a gathering parade of creatures from another dimension. (I chuckled, thinking that they were morphed escapees from Pennsylvania Ballet's *Carnival of the Animals* which was playing a couple of doors down.) Disappointingly, the dance climaxed about halfway through while the music continued towards its riotous conclusion. Without more dancers to add or amplify the choreography the dance had no place left to go. If Koresh could resist the urge to peak so early he would have a true blockbuster on his hands.

Also on the program were Nora Gibson Performance Project's *Corollary to Fugue in G Minor* and Just Sole: Street Dance Theatre's *The Real World*. Gibson's softly sustained choreography featured two women fittingly costumed in beige and grey tones. Just Sole's piece opened with the 13-member company earnestly searching the stage. Once the dancers wearing the same color t-shirts were united, this upbeat, hip-hop based dance began.

Come Together was a big undertaking. By producing well-recognized choreographers alongside of emerging ones, Koresh provided a service that benefits the greater good of the Philadelphia dance community.

Come Together presented by Koresh Dance Company with Rennie Harris PureMovement (RHAW), BalletFleming, Nora Gibson Performance Project, Putty Dance Project, Kun-Yang Lin/Dancers, Just Sole: Street Dance Theatre, Koresh Dance Company. Suzanne Roberts Theatre, May 9. The festival ran May 2-12.

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