thINKingDANCE
Upping the ante on dance coverage and conversation

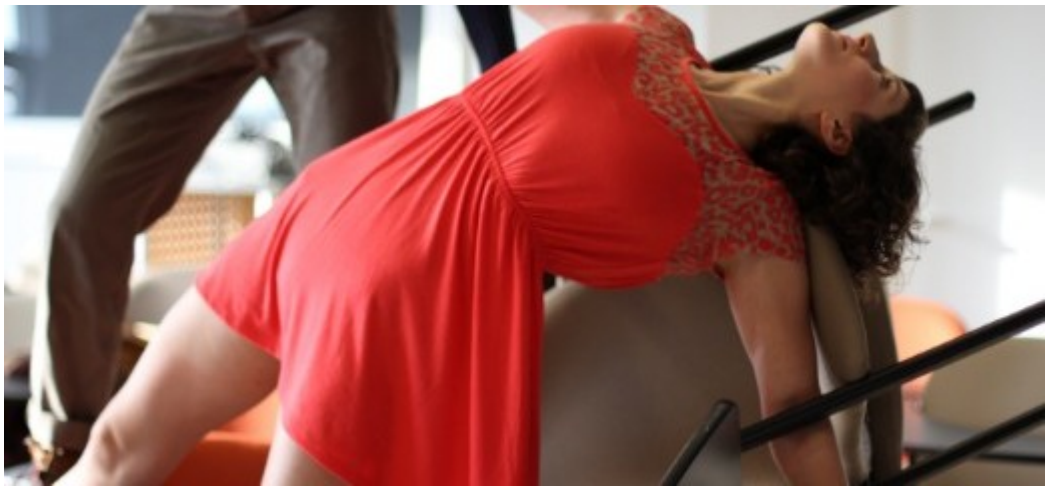


Photo: Tayarisha Poe

Duets Galore in a Hardware Store

by Kalila Kingsford Smith

Gabrielle Revlock's latest work *Confetti,* a medley of duets that featured Revlock dancing with her peers, her mother and an eight-year old, offered a dynamic and colorful assortment of relationships with her varying partners.

Revlock's piece and performance style changed shape depending on her pairing with dancers from diverse backgrounds. When dancing with local choreographer and performer Gregory Holt, her face was non-expressive, her actions more task oriented. Partnering with Amaryah "Loki" Bone, a B-Girl, Revlock structured the choreography to fit the format of a battle: you do what you do, then I'll do what I do. When she danced with eight-year-old Lily Savage, the stage became a playground and the performance expressed innocence. As the duets accumulated, so did elements of the stage design. Each new partner carried on a piece of hardware—a ladder, stacks of crates, buckets, rolling dollies. These props became their toys as they danced through the metal and plastic obstacle course.

Throughout the evening, I clung to the gestures and interactions that communicated Revlock's relationships to her partners. My mind created an inner dialogue between each pair, fabricating a back-story to add emotional content to their interactions. Mark McCloughan—a tall, thickly bearded man—strutted onstage wearing a sweater, booty shorts, high heels and a mop on top of his head. Revlock saw him, smirked, and put a hand over her eyes as if to say, "What are you wearing!" As Bone posed, bent over, with her hand on her chin looking towards the audience, Revlock stood back to consider the shape and then draped her body over Bone's back. In my head, I heard her say, "Can I put this here?" Immediately, Bone threw her off. "NO! What do you think you're doing?" Revlock shrugs, "Sorry!"

Revlock's naturally fluid and relaxed movement quality became more dynamic and rhythmic when she worked with performers of different technical backgrounds. This was most apparent when she partnered with Bharatanatyam dancer Shaily Dadiala. My understanding that Bharatanatyam gestures have a linguistic nature changed how I read Revlock's movements. Though I could

recognize some gestures that I had seen in earlier duets—shaking hands, tracing down the arm, flapping fingers like butterfly wings—when she danced with Dadiala, these gestures came into focus and took on new meaning and intention.

My mom was my special date for the night's performance, which was fitting since Revlock's mother, Beverly Agard, was one of her partners. Revlock and Agard stood close together shimmying and undulating their hips as though grooving to a good tune. My mom and I chuckled and shared a sideways glance. "That's what we do in the kitchen!" Revlock's interactions with her mother, who is not a dancer, came across as simultaneously caring and goofy when placed next to her exchanges with her peers.

The last duet was created in the moment with an audience member that Revlock coaxed up onto the stage. He stood in a pool of light as she repeated familiar motifs—tracing his arm down the side, linking arms, peeking out from behind his body, standing at arms length. It was as though she said, "I have shown you my relationships with these different people. Now let's consider my relationship to *you*, the audience. What are your boundaries? Can I hold your hand or should I hold you at arms length?" It was a beautiful metaphor for any choreographer trying to understand the changing relationship between audience and performance.

When we got home, my mom described the show to my dad: "You wouldn't call it dancing as much as movement." Though that would not have been my choice of words, I understood her meaning. *Confetti* wasn't saturated with abounding leaps and long extensions. Instead it asked the question, "How do I change when I dance and work with different people?" The lights faded on Revlock alone, pensively gazing into the heart of this question.

Confetti, Gabrielle Revlock, By Local Series at the Annenberg Center, January 24-25.

By Kalila Kingsford Smith
February 2, 2014