

thINKIngDANCE

Upping the ante on dance coverage and conversation



Photo: Andrew Bossi

Dropping Into Everything

by Megan Wilson Stern

Everything, the program tells me, “is a two hour improvised event that consists of all the things that Nicole Bindler (body-based performing artist) and Ashley Tini (percussionist) know or have ever known.” The audience is invited to come and go at any time, but I arrive half an hour into the event and sink right into an already-settled group. In the course of the hour and a half that I watch, a couple of people come or go, but most remain for the duration, scattered on couches, chairs, and futons throughout the living- room side of [thefidget space](#), an expansive warehouse turned home/performance space. Outside, rain drips steadily.

It has been raining all day. It has been raining for a long time.

While I rushed to get here, water hung in droplets and lay in puddles in the street, suspended.

Each moment shifts to the next and Bindler and Tini let action unfold through accident and serendipity. Tini has a large selection of instruments, including shakers, drums, and a marimba, but her performance is by no means restricted to creating sound; she is an active participant in movement. The scope of the performers’ attention is expansive. They use all of the space. They use whatever object is in their path. They even bring in some elements that cheekily reference the “everything-they-know” description. Tini (who is also a hair stylist) gets into a shuffling groove, dancing to the rhythm of her scissors. She runs brush and comb across the keys of her marimba and shimmers fill the air. She trims Bindler’s bangs. Bindler (who is also a body-worker) gives Tini a short massage.

There is an inevitability to the way they traverse the space, moving both very close to the audience and out of sight without hesitation.

Bindler floats through the space, eyes wide and receptive. She seems always to be moving in multiple directions at once; even when very still, her energy diffuses around her. Although she never hurries, she sometimes crosses the room before I know what is happening—like a cloud shifting, or maybe I am drifting away in a boat while she remains on shore.

Tini punctuates the space with more decisive action. Her footfalls are heavy as she paces from here to there, arranging, clearing, and rearranging objects as she goes. She takes her instruments and lifts them high, lays them out before her, kisses them, raises them again, like a priest or shaman preparing for a ritual that dissolves before it begins.

Everything flows on and time slips right through me.

I am equally engaged in watching the events unfold and in trying to feel the way the performers feel. My eyes wander. My skin is soft and inquiring. My fingers leisurely trace cracks in the wood floor. Bindler emerges from the kitchen, gargling water, and Tini joins the gargling while continuing to play marimba. It is a funny sight. But I close my eyes and the sound emerges in greater clarity; a rhythmic, chiming melody surrounded by two gurgling and conversing streams. Just under the surface, two voices call to one another across a distance. When furniture or other members of the audience block the performers from my view, I often don't shift to see them better, instead seeing the obstacles as frames. I don't want to disturb the still suspension of the room, and I feel no need take in everything.

There is no rush. This will go on for a long time.

Still, as I see the hands of the clock indicate the performance will end soon, I begin to strain to pay attention, not wanting to let the last bits slip past unnoticed. I feel an unwelcome hardness creep into my body, so I lay down and close my eyes. I sink under the surface of sleep and rise back up again to find only a minute has passed. In a few more minutes an alarm rings and *Everything* ends with little fanfare: a few casual high-fives and big open grins.

Suspension dissolves.

Back into the rain.

Everything, Nicole Bindler and Ashley Tini, thefidget space, May 21, <http://www.thefidget.org/thefidget-space/>

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