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3rd Law Dance Theatre

2012-03-16

3rd Law Dance - Captivating Philosophy

Boulder, CO. Examining a philosophic concept is not generally perceived as pure entertainment, Plato's descriptions of evenings with Socrates notwithstanding. Nonetheless the 3rd Law Dance/Theater captivated an audience with equal doses of speculation, humor, fascination and chutzpah in its show, "Authentic Re-Production" Friday night in the Performance Space of the Dairy Arts Center.

The idea of "Authentic Re-Production" centers on a blatant oxymoron: outside of museum gift shops selling "authorized" and "authentic" reproductions of objects in the collection, the idea of authenticity in copying is absurd. No one takes a poster depiction of a van Gogh painting for an authentic encounter with the original. But on the other hand Auguste Rodin made multiple castings of his sculptures - is one more authentic than another? Instant replay on television is not the original moment, but "more authentic" perhaps in capturing the crucial importance of the moment?

And how could a dance troupe capture philosophy in movement, or make the idea visual?

Enter the creative team of Katie Elliott and Jim LaVita, co-directors of the 3rd Law Dance/Theater with Darwin Grosse, credited as Electronic Media Artist. They embrace the concept behind the company's name: Isaac Newton's third law of motion, for every action there is an opposite and equal reaction. I'd dearly like to know

what action(s) prompted their responses.

Grosse enlarges the stage with video projections on three walls. Occasionally the front-on views skew to an oblique angle. The projection panels are sometimes dizzying the 20 frames of the back wall not at all synchronized and the two additional walls of 16 panels merging to be life-sized figures moving as though in fog. I cannot imagine the complexity needed to create this play of live dancers and their evidently real-time capture, but delayed display through clever camera work. At times the multiple imagery and live dancers (and their shadows) seem to fill the modest stage to Bolshoi proportions and cast to match!

Elliott and LaVita, I suspect, were responsible for breaking the idea of authenticity and reproduction into its component eight sections. Elliott is also credited with the choreography in conjunction with the cast members. The cast comprised Danielle Hendricks, Page Jenkins, Molly Pearson, Gwen Phillips, Grady Soapes, Stephen Straub and Mason Lawrence Taylor. The cast is costumed in grey and white; the projections are black and white. The whole has a kind of ghostly atmosphere occasionally starkly divided by Craig A. Bushman's lighting design.

The progression of "Authentic Re-Production" goes like this: Genuine Imitation (self-explanatory), 2D Surface to 3D Space (video projection and live dancers), Extracted Additions (an amusing speculation on ex-pat experiences and whether to be self-identified

as an ex-pat or try to blend with the natives - an un-genuine re-production?), Image Dissolve (a brilliant solo for Mr. Taylor as the video image fragments like so much smoke and fog though based on his camera capture to begin with), Seen Unseen (photography lies; so does memory), Against the Projected (a duo of surprising grace), Moving Still Life (ensemble, a summing up of ideas) and Unduplicatable ('nuff said).

Music for "Authentic Re-Production" was a collage from several sources, carefully selected.

One aspect of the performance remains with me: full figure projections made from the live-moment dancer, but slightly delayed

and repeated several times. A dancer would move aside, bow, fold her arms, step forward mirrored as if in strobe lights (without the flashes though) and seemingly to embrace and be embraced by the ghostly retinue behind her. Magic.

Additional performances: tonight at 7:30 p.m. and Sunday at 2 p.m. at The Dairy Arts Center, 26th and Walnut Sts., Boulder, CO. March 24 and 25: at 7:30 p.m. at The Newman Center, Byron Theater, University of Denver campus, S. University Ave. at Iliff.

Glenn Giffin

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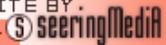
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