

thINKingDANCE

Upping the ante on dance coverage and conversation

Letter to the Editor: Megan Bridge Objects to "No Pukey Love Stories"

To The Editor:

As a current writer for TD who also serves on the editorial board, I care a lot about what kind of articles we publish on our site and whether they do or don't fulfill our main claim, "upping the ante on dance coverage and conversation."

I have some problem's with Christina Gesualdi's recently published article, "No Pukey Love Stories...(crowd-sourced responses from nine 25-40 yr. old Philly dancers)." I totally respect TD's encouragement and support of writers stepping outside the traditional forms of review, feature, etc. I appreciate Christina's attempt at allowing different voices to be represented on the site. But I think publishing an article like this makes TD look silly and not rigorous. "No Pukey Love Stories..." is a good read. It's sexy, maddening, and fun to try to imagine who authored the different comments. But the article remains anecdotal and superficial, and this is why I feel that it doesn't belong on thINKing DANCE. Perhaps if Christina had synthesized the comments and tried to make a clear point or argument that was somehow relevant to the field, I would feel differently.

There have been other examples of "crowd-sourced" articles on our site. This article by Anna Drozdowski on Leah Stein takes comments from people who have worked with Leah and seen her work over the years. Although the compiled comments are from "insiders" and consist almost entirely of praise, the difference is that they create a collected written document of reflections on the work of an established choreographer who makes up an important part of the fabric of Philly's dance community. "No Pukey Love Stories..." does no such thing.

There are potentially interesting discussions that could branch out of a survey like Christina's: "How does the physical experience of being a dancer effect biological responses in sex and love?" or "How do personal choices about family and love effect our ability and resources to carry on in life as an artist?" But "No Pukey Love Stories..." doesn't dig this deep. Much of the commentary feels plain irrelevant: why is it important for TD to publish gossipy intimate details about unidentified dancers' love lives? Other statements make ridiculous and hurtful claims while using impoverished language, such as: "I secretly think that artists become lame once they have kids. Their work becomes sappy, or they just don't have the time to be rigorous..." As an artist, mother of two, and someone who works incessantly to ensure a commitment to rigor at a high level in all the many jobs that I do, this comment made me really angry. If the sentiment is one that its author thinks only "secretly," then why is it published on TD? Can the author back up these statements with description and observation, which is something that we hold our writers to on TD when they make sweeping claims about an artist or their work?

The fact that the authors of the commentary in the article are unidentified feels cowardly to me. As I said in my own comment below Christina's article, I would like to invite the above comment's author into an open discussion about the politics of gender in the workplace, the social functions of child-rearing and art-making, and the concept of "rigor" in discourse, aesthetics, and artistic practice. I hope this letter might also elicit a response on these particular questions from Christina herself.

I respect Christina's work for TD deeply, we are colleagues and good friends. I hope that my candid responses here are taken in the way that I intend them, with respect, thoughtfulness, and with good intentions for the continuation of TD's role in furthering robust and rigorous dance coverage and conversation in Philadelphia.

Thank you,

Megan Bridge

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