

# thINKingDANCE

Upping the ante on dance coverage and conversation



Photo: Ryan Collerd

## Bricolage: A DIY Response to Trump

by Janna Meiring

“Bricolage” is a French contemporary term for DIY, where you take different elements of whatever is handy, and combine them to make something arty or functional. In this case, *Bricolage*—an evening of new dance works presented by [Lyons and Tigers](#)—does both by offering four pieces choreographed by local artists.

*Refract, Reflect, Absorb* choreographed by Meredith Stapleton

As it happens to be playing on NPR at this exact time, the voice of director Jordan Peele, speaking about the reality of racial violence, comes over the speakers. Three young white women enter and walk along the wall of exposed brick. “We are told that we are not seeing what we are seeing,” he says to Terry Gross on [Fresh Air](#). The women seem to be taking movement cues from each other. The sequences are observed first then echoed by the second and again by the third dancer. I sense a quality of segmentation and reconnection as they drop their heads, roll them along their chests, and finally land together in stillness low to the floor. Even through it wasn’t planned, I feel a pang of recognition in the play between the choreography and the interview; in regards to racism, white people tend to take cues from each other as they grapple with how to proceed.

*5 Stages of Grief* choreographed by Darcy Lyons

The reflection on racism established in the previous piece is followed keenly by *5 Stages of Grief*. I feel a tug on my heartstrings as it begins. A loud recording of Fox Media reporting live from Pennsylvania on election night overtakes the space. Four women, wearing subtle stripes of red, white, and blue, clump close together facing the audience. They progress slowly through postures and facial expressions of worry and shock as the news rolls in. There is a terrible feeling in the pit of my stomach. The four shake and tremor, fall as if from exhaustion, drag each other, and pull each other up. In one moment, they hold their knees tight and rock back and forth like scared children. In another, they flip their middle fingers up at everything. Passing through each stage of grief, they take turns scribbling messages on a white board:

“This isn’t happening”

“Yes it is”

“I can’t do this”

“Yes you can”

*gross power moves* choreographed by Celine McBride

At the edge of a single pool of purple light, a musician sits with a keyboard and fills the room with echoing round electronic tones. While traveling forward and back along a diagonal path of light, a dancer performs gestures of power: pointing her fingers, clasping her hands and raising them above her head in self-congratulations, thrusting her chest forward. She quickly and fluidly shifts between these nasty political stances and postures that reflect the impact of these “gross power moves” on the artist herself.

*subject: to change* choreographed by Mary-Carmen Webb and Harlee Trautman

The distinct sound of banging hands on school desks begins in the dark. Two performers then drag these desks slowly in a figure eight, sit, flip their right leg over the desk arm and raise the leg at an angle. They have an articulate physical conversation through the small details of school culture: tracing a finger on the desk, reading out loud, chewing PB&Js, trying to get the teacher’s attention, and generally being bored out of their minds. But this isn’t a surface piece about “school.” These women are unraveling a learned identity and re-educating themselves. It is a straight-up critical response to the school system, for girls in particular. The last image I see: a lone girl with her hand still raised, leaning forward. I wonder what the world is missing out on by not calling on her.

This small group of mighty young women artists are addressing—both directly and indirectly—the election of Donald Trump and the repercussions of the event. They respond by doing the necessary grieving and raging, but also attempt to construct some kind of antidote to complacency. This is the nature of DIY—utilizing the resources that you already have on hand to change what isn’t working.

*Bricolage*, Lyons and Tigers, The Iron Factory, March 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup>

By Janna Meiring

March 24, 2017