

thINKingDANCE

Upping the ante on dance coverage and conversation



Photo: Karl Allen

Buy Me Some Peanuts and Crackerjacks!

by Lisa Bardarson

I confess; I'm not a sports enthusiast, but with spring in the air my thoughts had turned to baseball. As a Seattle native and Philadelphia resident I felt like an excited fan rooting for not one but two home teams at a performance featuring The Real Shannon Stewart from Seattle and the Philadelphia-based Green Chair Dance Group.

At the top of the inning was Stewart's *An Inner Place That Has No Place*. Meredith Horiuchi, Mary Margaret Moore, Aaron Swartzman, Rosa Vissers, and David Wolbrecht began with a joyous, jogging formation that faced into the wings. As they scattered backwards into the space to a pulsing techno beat, their real-time images were projected onto the backdrop. This responsive video, designed by Adam Sekuler, created a high-energy playground as the dancers clapped and voiced encouragement to one another through the aerobic opening section. The jogging cluster rebooted to its opening formation for multiple re-workings.

Stewart's ability to explore theme and variation gave me a sense of orientation within the piece, and when she employed contact improvisation her dancers moved with clear energetic intent. This was a relief as I often feel that contact improvisation is used for filler when direction is in short supply, and it always leaves me with the same taste in my mouth ("Ah, Mom, tuna casserole AGAIN?"). In one section, Swartzman fought his way, Capoiiera-like, through the space with cathartic twists and thrusts. He was gamely supported by the other dancers who partnered his unpredictable moves, miraculously avoiding bloody noses. In another sequence a woman moved in meltingly slow slithers. Each of the dancers took a turn, approaching their assignment with fresh engagement, and I felt I'd been invited to view a piece of their story. I couldn't tell you the meaning, but I felt a part of it. The last tableau, with solo dancer against a virtual night sky, communicated a sense of belonging. Home run for Seattle.

Green Chair's *Tandem Biking and Other Dangerous Pastimes for Two...* featured its artistic directors Sarah Gladwin Camp, Hannah de Keijzer, and Gregory Holt with collaborative direction by Alex Torra. The stage was set with a desk holding a laptop, table lamp and some books--office or a rehearsal space?--I wondered. The dancers' verbal non-sequiturs directed at the audience were clunky. These

musings landed awkwardly, the text more confusing than illuminating although pronouncements like “We are luscious people” and “We are desperate people” did produce some chuckles.

There was a wonderful moment when Gladwin Camp entered bundled up in layers of winter garb. In her over-dressed state she repeated a movement sequence viewed earlier that was nearly impossible for her to execute. Her exposed face grew redder under the stage lights; her discomfort part of the entertainment. de Keijzer and Holt joined in and demonstrated how partnering might look in an unheated studio in winter. All three of them stripped off the cold-weather gear and piled the clothes into a silo created by their leaning bodies. Clad in nothing but bathing suits, they invited the audience to follow them into another climate and location; the beach! By the end of the piece, the verbal and visual fragments had accumulated enough for me to conclude that this dance was about the journey, having fun and throwing a few curveballs along the way.

SCUBA '13 National Touring Network for Dance--The Real Shannon Stewart and Green Chair Dance Group presented by Philadelphia Dance Projects at Temple Univ. Conwell Dance Theater, March 22 and 23. No further performances.

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