

thINKingDANCE

Upping the ante on dance coverage and conversation



Photo: Scotty Hardwig

Moving Objects

by Meredith Bove

Through the associative power of objects, Tzveta Kassabova's double bill *From Somewhere*, seems aimed at capturing familiar worlds. She locates her works in settings that are evocative, but skeleton-like in their absence of specific experience or narrative. Her use of objects is metaphorical, and these metaphors are fragile and slippery.

In *of this world of ours*, a massive, heavy rope hangs suspended from the ceiling. Most of its bulk lies meticulously coiled on the floor—I think of lifelines in the cross section of a tree. Dancers Joey Loto, Lacey Moore, Keanu Brady and Emma Geisdorf trickle in, struggling against gravity, tripping through the space with heavy gaits. One periodically lets out a cry, like that of a baby.

Kassabova, who lies on the floor, catalyzes a process of unraveling the neat coils by pulling the loose end of the rope. The unraveling continues throughout the remainder of the approximately hour-long work. With each pull, the coil is erased, a messy tangle accumulating on the other end. The dancers evoke the uncontainable energy of small children with hops and bobs, wiggles and flutters. The unraveling rope takes on a sense of inevitability, reminiscent of the melancholy I imagine parents to feel as they watch their children grow.

The dancers' waverings give way to secure unison dance phrases, accompanied by a heavily effected and electronic score by Michael Wall. In these moments, I forget about time passing, and my thoughts turn to nuts and bolts, construction and craft. *I wonder how long it took them to make that phrase...*the grinding rhythms of the score function like movie trailer music, transparent in its desire to manipulate emotions. Always resistant to the first whiff of ulterior motives, I dig my heels in.

In *Motorless Park*, (a collaboration between Kassabova and Joshua Bisset of Shua Group) the objects of focus are car tires. My program tells me these tires were originally illegally disposed of around the city of Detroit, then collected and repurposed for the project. At first look, these tires have magical anthropomorphic properties, seeming not to adhere to physics and gravity, but rather to desire and will. Dancers, wearing a uniform of drab grey pants and red hooded sweatshirts—a *representation of urban culture?*—heave them from

the side of the stage. Watching their random paths decelerate to a slow, suspended stop is thrilling—my heart rate may have risen just a little at the near crashes.

New images unfold. Some are compelling, some mundane, others absurd. Dancers droop like sleepwalkers with heavy tire-necklaces, perch upon tires unceremoniously, or wear tires like inner tubes and run into each other screaming. The images and their sequencing feel accidental, like the randomness encapsulated in any cityscape. Later when Kassabova somberly turns a dial on a dated portable radio, it confirms my suspicions of the arbitrary nature of all unfolding before me.

There are lovely glimmers in *of this world of ours*, as in its last moments when the only remaining ring of the rope coil disappears and is pulled upward. I'm surprisingly moved by the occurrence of what I knew to be inevitable. The dancers come together, facing the back wall of the theater, their hands flitting uncontrollably.

From Somewhere, Tzveta Kassabova, Dance Place, Washington, DC, January 25.

By Meredith Bove

February 2, 2016