

thINKingDANCE

Upping the ante on dance coverage and conversation



Photo: Bicking Photography

A Night of Giving Change

Connecting Through Movement, presented by Project Moshen, provided a quality, concise evening of dance and good will. A portion of the event's proceeds benefited [Make-A-Wish](#), a foundation that grants terminally ill children a wish. Common wishes include meeting a celebrity or traveling to Disney World in VIP status. Being a Wish kid myself, this organization is very close to my heart. I was also delighted to return to the Performance Garage, recently free of construction dust from its first phase of renovations. Its noteworthy barn door back wall greeted me after walking through an extended lobby area that, on this particular night, displayed a small raffle, tasty treats, and wine.

The sold-out, 120-seat house bore witness to an assortment of performance companies. Introspective Movement Project, a contemporary jazz group, was presented in black, silk nighties, though nothing was sexy about their movement. With serious expressions, they moved with intention. One trio member, stripped to black shorts and a bralette, was aggressively pushed or avoided by the others. Differences in timing and direction layered and clashed, building in momentum and overlapping to a chaotic intensity, until the women in nighties abruptly walked in alternate directions away from the third. This seemed a battle of one's ego, an attempted confrontation between dissonant, yet coexisting, parts of the self.

SkyDance Philly moved to a song by Sia, donning the singer's noteworthy black and white wigs and nude leotards. They skillfully kicked beyond their heads, opened their mouths in silent screams, and ran like animals in a satirical way. Sia would have been proud.

The pieces that stood out the most were two works in the first half presented by Project Moshen and an excerpt from *Barry*, choreographed by guest artist Asya Zlatina ([which I fell in love with during the 2016 Fringe Festival](#)). These dancers harmonized a captivating mastery of power and durability with finesse and delicacy.

Through the evening, I watched the artists touch each other closely and curiously, though with blank expressions. I saw people lift bodies in support and redirection. I saw acrobatic tricks for the sake of entertainment. I saw formality and intimacy, directness and hesitation. I was reminded that, as humans, we instinctively connect through movement, even if we experience that movement as an

observer. When I watch someone hit his head, I cringe. When I see a baby smile, my face brightens. My [mirror neurons](#) facilitate a shared experience, even from afar. When I actually participate in movement with another—rocking together, an embrace, holding hands—the experience is heightened.

Considering the event's support for Make-A-Wish, I couldn't help but wonder how these themes related to kids in life-threatening conditions and their support networks. In light of the holiday season, I was reminded that contact and meaningful interactions are a gift that Wish families depend on throughout the entire year. When children writhe in pain, those around them stir in discomfort, suffering in a different way. An extended hand or a gentle smile are sometimes the simplest, yet most effective ways, to offer a sense of understanding and togetherness in a world that can often seem apathetic.

Connecting Through Movement, Project Moshen, Performance Garage, December 3, <http://www.projectmoshen.com/performances/>

By Whitney Weinstein

January 31, 2017