

thINKingDANCE

Upping the ante on dance coverage and conversation



Photo: Simpatico Theatre

"You Jump, I Jump. Right?"

by Barbora Pěřihodová

"You jump, I jump. Right?" That is the famous line, and a sort of a motto of young lovers Rose and Jack, from James Cameron's iconic 1997 movie *Titanic*. It could very well be a motto of *Thomas is Titanic*, written and performed by [Thomas Choinacky](#)* and directed by Justin Jain, one of four one-man shows produced by Simpatico Theatre for their *Simpatico 4 Solo* project. Also in the series are *Idaho Shuffle*, *The Best of Me*, and *LUVR*, all exploring 'masculinity in America' and 'our hyper gendered society' (program notes).

Choinacky's whirlwind autobiographical performance weaves together the story of a 'closeted queer boy' who didn't fit in growing up in the Midwest, now a rising artist whose multidisciplinary practice transcends traditionally defined art categories, with the famed blockbuster film that made him 'obsessed' with the actress Kate Winslet. I can only imagine how frightening this self-diving and self-exposing trip must be. But, "You jump, I jump. Right?", the artist asks us, the audience, repeatedly. "Right," we continually assure him in a gesture of support, comfortably seated in our chairs.

This high-powered, energetic show reveals Choinacky as a versatile and highly imaginative stage artist and an outstanding comedian. The solo brings together quieter, reflective moments of the artist's auto-narration with rowdier scenes that involve dancing, singing, puppetry (featuring the one and only *Titanic*, an iceberg, and the Atlantic ocean), and lip synching Céline Dion's *My Heart Will Go On*. For me, the highlights are the comedic moments, especially when Choinacky re-enacts scenes from the movie that are simultaneously projected on a screen hung above the stage. These episodes are hysterical (imagine the sex scene between the two lovebirds doubled on stage by Choinacky as Rose in a passionate embrace with a chair, aka Jack) and expose the corniness of the popular movie itself. My pleasure here is multiplied; being of the same generation as Choinacky, I also grew up amidst *Titanic* mania. But there is more than that: when Choinacky re-performs the scene in which Jack draws Rose posing stylized as a naked Venus, the image of conventional feminine beauty on the screen radically clashes with the stage presence of the masculine, hair-covered body in briefs trying to assume the same position of an object of sexual desire. "Now, draw ME," Choinacky instructs us, claiming our attention and acknowledgment. In moments like this I see how this testimonial performance—an act of bravery on its own—challenges staid notions, like what it means to

be masculine, feminine, and beautiful. Let's hope we can all jump with you, Thomas!

*Thomas is a writer with thINKingDANCE

Thomas is Titanic, [Simpatico 4 Solo](#), Simpatico Theatre, Sept 22-30.

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