

thINKingDANCE

Upping the ante on dance coverage and conversation



Photo: Brian Sanders' JUNK

Diving Deep

by Whitney Weinstein

Brian Sanders' JUNK did it again. In *Plunge* he brought eroticism, athleticism, and unconventional ingenuity to the stage. His boldness can feel overwhelming, so I did some research before this show, finding on his [website](#) that it "look[s] at our present day culture—from the future ... throughout a ... 60's styled, outdoor cocktail lounge." Set in a year beyond 2060, the dancers and their props were on display for study.

On a rooftop, two performers waved oversized pieces of plastic that shimmered in the light. When the plastic was thrown off the pavilion, it gracefully billowed and fluttered to the ground. The audience cheered emphatically. I had to admit, the rippling trash did have a bewitching charm.

Through the loudspeaker, I heard announcements about biodegradability, "sustainablism," and waste. Women with exaggerated hips (they stuffed their pantyhose) twerked with flat affect. It was haunting. They moved without joy, but also without resistance.

Then there were more impressive feats, the type of vigorous stunts I anticipate from Sanders. A man leaned back on a swing. Above him on the same swing, a woman held the ropes with both hands while using the man's chest as a surface for her foot to ground an arabesque.

A female dancer decked out like Marilyn Monroe moved sensually with a man. When another woman wearing pants entered, the man engaged her in a more aggressive duet, grabbing her by the throat. Eventually the women snapped his neck. Now *here* was a commentary on gender roles that I could understand.

The announcer informed us we would witness a "stereotypical chant." Two women in semi-translucent unitards moved in slow motion,

stuffed cats balanced atop their heads. David Banner's explicit song "[Play](#)" blasted; sandwiched between the women, the man poured water from the stuffed cats as we heard the lyric, "I'm tryna get your pussy wet." The audience's laughter in that moment was the most resonant.

Was I offended or entertained? Victim or assailant? Proud or ashamed? While *Plunge* felt ambiguous at times, it was also ironic, absurd, and so over-the-top that it felt simultaneously depressing and hilarious. Sex is complicated, potentially uncomfortable, and ubiquitous. *Plunge* captures its layers upon layers of unspoken truths and chronicles that reside in our bodies.

[Plunge](#), [Brian Sanders' JUNK](#), The Patio at Spring Arts, September 7-8, 14-15, 21-22.

By Whitney Weinstein

September 17, 2018