

thINKingDANCE

Upping the ante on dance coverage and conversation



Photo: Ryan Collerd

Fringe Dance Offerings Get Personal and Political

by Karl Surkan

Dance audiences got a taste of four different Fringe shows at a preview showcase at the Performance Garage, all varying greatly in both theme and form, from the personal to global political issues. The program featured Klassic Contemporary Ballet Company (KCBC), Rowan University theater students, Dancefusion, Megan Flynn, Dance Iquail, and Lyons and Tigers. The result was a delightful collection of different styles and content, ranging from more conventional contemporary dance to experiments in movement theater.

The sound of dripping water set a stark tone for a KCBC duet as dancers in black adorned with feathers crawled onstage from the left. The eerie, even sinister sound of discordant strings cast a feeling of unease as later, standing, they pulled themselves along an invisible rope. The dance ended in a reversal of the opening, with the dancers crawling backwards as the lights faded.

That movement can be theatrical was never more evident in the excerpt of Rowan University's *In America, That is to Say No Where*. A raunchy re-make of 19th century playwright Albert Jarry's *Ubu Roi*, it was introduced by Melanie Stewart as a play that was only performed once publicly due to its controversial content. tD writer Jonathan Stein reviewed this work; read it [here!](#)

Returning to a community-based exploration of Dance Iquail's roots in West Philadelphia, the video *From a Director's Point of View* traced artistic director Iquail Shaheed's embrace of dance through the lens of his identity as a queer youth growing up in the city. Combining narrative by Iquail with studio dance footage alongside candid shots on West Philly streets, the short film presented a complex portrait of Iquail and his commitment to the exploration of social justice through dance.

Iquail's film shares a program with Dancefusion and Megan Flynn at this year's Fringe. The works complemented each other, offering audiences glimpses of Janet Pilla Marini's *Dawn Chorus*, Omar-Frederick Pratt's *Pictures in Glass Houses*, and Flynn's *Ties*. The last was inspired by the contradiction Flynn observed between her own childhood memories and the stories emerging about children held in

detention centers at the border.

The evening concluded with an excerpt of yet another timely piece, *Proceed With Caution*, performed by Lyons and Tigers. Inspired by the #MeToo movement, the dance provoked issues of security, trust, and navigating personal space by exploring conflicted partnering, resistance to attempted embraces and voiceover personal narrative of sexual assault. The title was accompanied by a trigger warning alerting audiences to potentially disturbing content.

[Fringe Preview](#), KCBC, Megan Flynn, Dance Iquail, Dancefusion, Rowan University Theater, Lyons and Tigers, Performance Garage, 2019 Fringe Festival, August 24.

By Karl Surkan (1970-2023)

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