

thINKingDANCE

Upping the ante on dance coverage and conversation



Screenshot: Maddie Hopfield

Meet Dick and Jane

by Maddie Hopfield

Meet Dick (Ben Grinberg) and Jane (Rhonda Moore*).

The two have “admired each other from afar” in the Philadelphia dance world for years, and have finally, in the oddest of Fringe seasons, come together to see what their bodies, in combination, will do. The result is a combination dance film and behind the scenes reel, a romp into the throes of an early collaboration—so much to try, so much to discuss.

In the stark blackness of a soundstage, Moore and Grinberg warm and stretch their bodies as gentle piano music plays. Moore rolls on her back, Grinberg presses his knees open into a butterfly stretch. And so our film begins as so many rehearsal processes do: with minimal eye contact, a waking up, and an early quiet quivering with possibility.

On a day that threatens rain, Jane and Dick arrive, an onscreen slide reads. Throughout the film, these storybook-like lines serve as grounding visual partitions between sections. They also reference the film’s name, *fun with dick and jane: working title*, and the humorous contrast it elicits: here, Dick and Jane are not the blue-eyed, blonde-haired children pictured in the vintage kids’ books but instead a gay Jewish man and a Black woman.

In one of the many meta-conversations about the creation process documented in the film, the two foray the two make mention of their racial differences. The topic arises after Grinberg himself mentions that he is genetically colorblind. "I think colorblindness should be a dominant trait," Moore remarks. "That would solve a lot of problems!" She laughs, then delves further, asking Ben, "What color is your shirt? Oh excuse me, what color am I? " When he responds, "Well, you know," she says, "No, *you* know, and I know you know. But if you didn't know, you'd see dark and light, right? Okay, the jig is up!" The two laugh. It is clear that they are of different races. It is clear that race constitutes only a portion of what makes two different people alike and different.

Over the course of the 40-minute film, Moore and Grinberg explore many aspects of their new artistic relationship, presenting the audience with a bountiful buffet of different sections and ideas. A particular highlight is a recurring CLIMB TIME session, in which Grinberg hoists Moore up into various acrobatic poses as he coaches her. As the film progresses, so does her comfort level as a flyer. Towards the end of the piece she stands on his shoulders with full confidence, arms outstretched.

The film closes out with the two in a playful but tender masked duet, as a voice recording from a Zoom call plays in the background. One cannot watch *fun with dick and jane: working title* and forget what year we are in, a working title of a year if there ever was one. The broader ethos of the piece thus feels emblematic of the current moment, for it itself is not a singular product but rather a collection of hopeful experiments.

*Rhonda Moore is a writer for thINKingDANCE.

[fun with dick and jane: working title](#), Ben Grinberg and Rhonda Moore, 2020 Fringe Festival; Vimeo, September 14-October 4.

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