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Sharp Dance Company: The Other Side is Looking Bright

by Lauren Putty White

[Sharp Dance Company](#) is back! After suffering the common artist plight of no in-person performances during the initial peak of the pandemic, artistic director [Diane Sharp-Nachsins](#) reunited her dancers to remind us what good ole' concert dance feels like in the same place and in real time. It felt like home, seeing these artists together in the intimate black box space at Christ Church Neighborhood House, leaving it all on the dance floor, making up for lost time. My adrenalin immediately started kicking in once the lights dimmed to start the performance.

The show opened with an introduction video showing footage of past company shows and tours throughout the years, as well as behind the scenes teasers of rehearsals. The warmth and welcoming energy was inviting, as it was evident that these dancers were more than just a team of collaborators, or colleagues, they were a genuine family with undeniable chemistry. *Wings* was the first piece, a duet choreographed by Sharp on dancers [Sandra Davis](#) and [Miguel Quiñones](#). I saw shadows of the two bodies dimly lit, physically echoing the breathy voices in the music, spiraling, reaching and longing for something or someone unknown. Then a small painting of a young woman gazing out of a window with her eyes piercing through the audience revealed on the upstage screen. Perhaps this woman represented Davis's character, lonely and grief-ridden, reminiscing about a man she loved and lost. When Quiñones mysteriously exited, leaving her alone center stage, I was convinced he was nothing more than a dream, a distant memory.

What followed was an upbeat solo called *Other Side* performed by ten-year company veteran, [Kate Lombardi](#). Though I have enjoyed watching the beautiful technician that Lombardi is over the years, I felt this solo tribute to her was a bit stagnant, not fully showcasing her capabilities as a powerful artist or performer. The monotone softness of the movement left me wanting so much more. However, the "more" I wanted definitely delivered in the next piece choreographed by Quiñones, entitled *I am Here*. This dance by far was one of the true highlights of the show. I can always appreciate a piece that hones in on each individual dancer's uniqueness, and that is just what this did. Composed of two sections, each a quartet, the soundtrack was an electronic, hip hop flavor with a rugged edginess that was

captivating from the first beat. Angles, sharp elbows, rhythmic isolations of body parts was an ongoing theme. Grounded stomping of the feet, rib cage thrusts and pelvic distortions displayed the body, and I was mesmerized by the kinetic energy.

An excerpt of *Blind Faith*, originally choreographed in 2010 by Sharp, was an enthralling trio with dancers [Juliet Bernstein](#), Sandra Davis, and Kate Lombardi. Though I could have done without singer [Kate Bush's](#) anti-climactic rendition of "This Woman's Work," the choreography and dancing was exquisite. The dancers manipulated a large piece of black and red fabric that served as a stage covering, a drape and a large skirt. The fabric wrapped the bodies so that they intertwined with each other in a way that was aesthetically satisfying, delivering an intricacy of symmetric shapes. Covering, hiding, disappearing and reappearing, perhaps this was a story of 3 generations of women in a family.

Next was *Vertigo*, a video of the quarantine piece the company members filmed separately in different spaces. It was a short but very familiar throwback of what making dance looked like this time last year. The last two pieces of the evening were an excerpt from Sharp and [Joe Cotler's](#) piece *Puzzle*, and a company premiere of NYC choreographer [Jon Lehrer's](#) work *Murmur*. While *Puzzle* remained a beloved favorite collabo, it was refreshing to see yet another choreographic perspective from Lehrer. The opening section with the ensemble had a playfulness and light nostalgic quality that provoked a feeling of familiarity. The music reminded me of a popular, old TV sitcom, something wholesome and family-oriented. This gradually shifted into a darker, more melancholy space with a simple quartet. Then the other company members returned, uniting in full company force with sound effects of thunder and rain, dancers weaving in and out of each other, seemingly fragile, yet solid. The partnering work in this section was quite elegant and non-pretentious. The lifts and touch between dancers was so effortless, it evoked a feeling of humanity in their relationships. The company as a whole danced fluently together, making the program complete and fulfilling.

Thank you Sharp Dance Company for triggering waves of inspiration for your audiences this Fall season.

[The Other Side](#), Sharp Dance Company, Christ Church Neighborhood House, Nov. 12-14.

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November 18, 2021