

thINKingDANCE

Upping the ante on dance coverage and conversation



Photo: William Frederking

Calling All Querthlings

by Xander Cobb

The intro music reminds me of the intro reel to a superhero comic episode, an electronic keyboard, Prince version. A single sidelight illuminates an upstage path like the beam from a UFO. An astronaut in glittering blue pants and a blue bomber struts this path straight to the doorway of light on the opposite wall. They get close enough for their shadow to fill the doorway of light. They jump and jump, two legs bending, both arms swinging. Their spaceship take-off hiit workout completes with a star jump.

This is how Nora Sharp begins Cosmic Docks at The Louis Bluver Theater at The Drake, which they nickname the “Louis Bluey,” produced by Cannonball Festival. With the sensibilities of a comedian and the mic to boot, they bring us right into the present time and place, riffing on Philly jawns despite being from Chicago, and even invite us to hash things out at the bar later. Eventually, they ditch the mic as the sound repeatedly cuts in and out. They don’t need it. They project well and our audience is intimate.

Nora takes us to Dr. Rose’s office in Bryn Mawr, where they discovered a cosmic document addressed to Querthlings: 17 Alternative or Unexpected Indicators Slash Explicators of Queerness and or Transness. They’ve printed it out and begin to read. I’m reminded of the [“Am I a Lesbian? Masterdoc.”](#)

This document is the map for the rest of the piece. Numbers one through four are a straightforward list. Numbers five and beyond zap from gestural dances, to original ballads, to memories, to mystic possession. We travel to their grandparents house in Nashville, where Nora searches for a photograph of their grandparents in drag, to a third grade sleepover where they think “doing nails” means hammering nails into a board.

Throughout, we get comments exchanged in the document’s margins between the writer, Jeff, your stereotypical straight man co-worker, and editors, anonymous aardvark and the like, who are passive and crouch a little when they make suggestions. Nora

embodies all these characters and more with deft breadth of body language, facial expressions and dance styles. I take their ability to switch between gender expressions to be core to their queer searching.

If you also crave a simple list, a family photograph, a magazine personality quiz, that will definitively say yes, you are queer, you have been and always will be, a bare breastless top-surgeryed chest awaits you, get a ticket to Nora's cosmic journey for tonight at 5pm.

[Cosmic Docks](#), Nora Sharp, The Louis Bluver Theater at the Drake, September 5-6.

Image description: *A white person wears an astronaut helmet with the face shield down, though it doesn't quite cover their chin. They stand with one foot in front of the other and hold up an arm, softly opening their palm to face forward as if waving or saying "hold up". Turquoise light makes shapes on their open palm and their neck. They're dressed in textures of blue, glimmering pants and a blue bomber with cinched ruffled seams along the arms. Two stage blocks rest behind them, one with a pair of plush white boots set atop.*

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