

thINKingDANCE

Upping the ante on dance coverage and conversation



photo: Jason Chen

"Last Monday" Highlights Diverse and Playful Local Work

by Amelia Longo

This month's "Last Monday," Hybridge Arts Collective's multidisciplinary performance series at Broad Street Ministry, interwove dance, music, and poetry -- not to mention dinner -- into a program of five fun and absurd, if disjointed, experiments.

Among this collection of artists, musician Dina Yarmus sang and played original ukulele tunes with social-justice themes, while somatic mover Lee Fogel led the audience in a body-awareness exercise and read a few poems that were rich in detailed imagery. Dancer Christina Gesualdi teetered across the floor in her work-in-progress, *sequeriosential*, slowing down at the top of each diagonal, as if pushed by outside forces on a rope swing. Gesualdi started and stopped moving as sporadically as the tinkly electronic music, offering an intriguing beginning of a piece I'd like to see in its completion.

El Malito (aka Les Rivera) unexpectedly interspersed dance moves within his Puerto Rican grime music, a surprising blend of Boricua slang and British hip hop. He tossed out a few quick salsa and popping steps between bilingual raps, with the casual bravado of a parlor trick that alluded to greater skill. Not surprisingly, in the song "Platypus" he asserted, "I'm not one thing -- I'm many things." Zombie ballerinas burst from the audience to join in pop music video biddies fashion and bounced back later as extras in a night club skit, which El Malito concluded by stripping down to his briefs. Two "inter-galactic special guests" took the floor for a seemingly-gravity-less, super slow, hyper-sexual dance interlude. The mood swung from pop to performance art, an odd, dizzying nod to the rest of the evening, which was more dance performance than dance party.

Finally, Headlong co-directors Amy Smith and Andrew Simonet continued the joyous absurdity with an excerpt from *Desire*, its planned performances postponed due to fellow performer/co-director David Brick's back injury. Smith read an explanatory letter from Brick on what looked like a paper bag -- he had sent a butternut squash in his stead. After Simonet placed the squash in front of the raised stage, he bounced and kicked like a Gumby Rockette to the song "I Want a Hippopotamus for Christmas." Behind him, Smith crept along with a lantern, hunching with curious and concerned looks.

The two then moved in silence through floppy tai chi and grabbing gestures, playing off of each other's ideas, which morphed into something the audience was not quite privy to. An atmosphere of confusion remained until the music started again, and their seemingly improvised dance melded wonderfully with REM's "Superman" (a strange link to El Malito, whose briefs were emblazoned with the logo for the very same hero).

Hosting Headlong Dance Theater was clearly a treat for Hybridge, whose founders are gushing alums of the Headlong Performance Institute and quick studies on recreating Headlong's signature community feeling. This "Last Monday" offered an entertaining glimpse into the playful new performance work happening around the city, and I look forward to the next.

"Last Mondays," Hybridge Arts Collective, Broad Street Ministry. Last Monday of each month. \$5.

<http://www.hybridgearts.org/>

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