

thINKingDANCE

Upping the ante on dance coverage and conversation



Photo: Eric Ashleigh

Experiencing Meg Foley

by Megan Bridge

Dear Meg,

It was such a pleasure to see you dance just now. Your body is intelligent, articulate, precise. Programs were given out post-show, and I just read your notes, which you disclaim by saying that you “don’t like program notes, to read or to write.” So first I want to say that I do like program notes, especially by artists like you who have big ideas that are relevant and questioning; ideas that ask your audience to ask your questions, or at least be aware of them, alongside you. You believe in art that is interactive, “not in the way that the performer gets in your face or that you’re moved around or that it’s precisely framed just for you, instead that it inspires you to notice time passing...”

We all enter the space. Then you enter the space, the six of you, the performers. You make a pile of yourselves on the floor. You are lying in a pool of light. One at a time you extricate yourselves from the pile, taking turns leaving and returning. You chat with each of us, the audience members, individually. Your direction, “take this chair and move it over there,” is delivered casually, but there’s a hush to it. This is serious. We all settle down in our assigned positions, some audience members on that side, some on this. You are in the middle, with Chris Forsyth, who is creating the music for our collective experience. The room fills with deepening red, until the light fades slowly and my eyes fight for focus. Lenore Doxsee is comfortable in her medium, reminding us of the many ways that light can guide our attention. Colors saturate, or isolate. Spots may follow, lasers point. In this shifting environment, and over the next sixty minutes, my attention is directed to many beautiful things.

The doors to the theater are thrown open by your Greek chorus of dancers (Christina Gesualdi, Magda San Millan, and Annie Wilson). The audience members seated opposite me are thrown into stark silhouette. I’m sad that they, with their backs to the rectangle of grey twilight, can’t see what I’m seeing. The bright red of an exit sign hovers above their heads. This bugs me at first, until I realize that the

color of the light that you sit in with Chris matches the exit sign exactly. It's a precise visual image, one that feels carefully constructed (is it?), and I'm drawn to that.

The dancers approach us again. We're asked to stand shoulder to shoulder, to "extend the line" you've set up with Chris and Lenore on one side of the space. We notice our huge shadows looming on the wall. Next we are directed to lie on the floor. The dancers helicopter and tiptoe over us. I wonder if anyone will get stepped on. I'm pretty uncomfortable. The guy to my right has a shirt that's riding up to expose his belly. I prop myself up on my elbows. I'm the only one, and I'm really glad that I do this, because I catch a fading image of dancers standing stock-still in a follow-spot at the end of the room. I feel lucky, I think no one else sees this.

Now we're moved again...half of us directed to go up to one balcony, and half to the other. You dance for us on the balcony, a few feet away. Now it's my turn to wonder what the people opposite me can see. Lenore pulls up the window shades, you are dancing on the floor now. I catch my breath. Perfectly, precisely framed (just for me?) by the window is a patch of snow-covered grass. A bundled dude is playing with his dog. Unbeknownst to you, I am sure, your movement echoes his...you wander, turn, scan and step. Your weight shifts. The movement fades. You lie still in a frame of yellow light, bathed in warmth that permeates your skin, a stark contrast to the pale cold outside. I look up, and there's the exit sign again. It makes me think of Sartre and "no" and admonitions versus invitations versus demands versus commands. If this performance is "with" me then could I cut that space now like the light does? Like the bossy sound made by Chris' boots as he cuts it with his patriarchal stride? Cut right across and walk out that door? What then? Would you still be dancing if we, your co-experiencers, were gone?

The whole time in the meanwhile. by Meg Foley, Chris Forsyth, Lenore Doxsee. Jan 23-27, 2013, Christ Church Neighborhood House.

[Tickets: http://thewholetime.eventbrite.com/](http://thewholetime.eventbrite.com/)

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