

# thINKingDANCE

Upping the ante on dance coverage and conversation



## How to Write Like A N.Y. Times Critic, or Notes on a Workshop with Claudia La Rocco

by Kristen Gillette

Sunday, February 24<sup>th</sup> at the LAB, Painted Bride Arts Center

*You have the freedom to determine the audience for your critique*

Audience determines what your piece contains

Do you make it a historical record?

Mention every dancer?

Include the context of the event?

...Or not?

*Criticism is an art form too*

Our critique pieces serve two art forms: dance and writing

Ultimately, it's important to serve the art form of criticism; it becomes impossible if you try to serve every person in the piece

*If you use "I" voice well, people don't argue with it*

Trust that readers will know your piece is one person's point of view

Don't issue a disclaimer

*Use what you know*

Don't be afraid to use your specialized knowledge

Use your experiences and knowledge you've gained as an artist

*Don't be afraid to write about what you don't know well or are confused about*

So many of the things we think of as problems and limitations are the best things we have

The problems and limitations we bring often create the richest writing

*Avoid too much frosting*

Be aware of modifier pile-up

*Don't be too cute*

Avoid relying on cute clichés to get into a work “I was transported into the work by...”

Be cautious of the line between being deliberate and a bit precious; sometimes kids' questions can be evocative—sometimes not

*Build an architecture in your piece*

You want to vary structure: Humor is a good way. Or facts: from dry facts, to a comment that is sarcastic, so there are different rhythms and textures

Think about how a dance phrase or a lawyer's opening arguments are structured

Hash it out with yourself if you have varying opinions, double back, be vibrant and strong in the moment

*Deploy ONE Sarcasm Dart*

“The problem with sarcasm is that it can be easy for us to dismiss what you're saying”

Instead of using a bunch of little darts, deploy one. It's more powerful. Creates space for you as a writer

*Be cautious of loaded metaphors*

Loaded metaphors stop a piece dead in its tracks

Be aware of the implications of summing up a work in one sentence or metaphor

*...but make sure you HAVE a clear opinion*

“I'm not particularly into reading something that doesn't have a strong opinion “

For Claudia's take on her work with us and selections from our writing with her visit <http://theperformanceclub.org/2013/02/philly-edition/>

By Kristen Gillette

April 1, 2013