

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 24th 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

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