

thINKingDANCE

Upping the ante on dance coverage and conversation



Photo: Julieta Cervantes

We Are Moses

by Kalila Kingsford Smith

Show me your Moses, and I'll tell you who you are. – Reggie Wilson, post-show talkback.

How many times has the Moses figure appeared throughout belief traditions and history? Reggie Wilson, inspired by this question, traveled to Israel and Egypt researching Moseses from different lands and cultures. Cherishing Zora Neale Hurston's *Moses Man of the Mountain*, Wilson embraced the question, "How do we lead and why do we follow?" After more than two years of research and development, Reggie Wilson/Fist and Heel Performance Group premiered *Moses(es)* last night at the Suzanne Roberts Theatre, bringing to life the nature of leadership within a community.

A mound of tinsel is strewn about center stage, its sparkling silver-ness contrasting the red suitcase beside it. Wilson walks through the mound, sculpting a clear path for the other dancers to follow. As the recorded voice of Louis Armstrong sings a jazzy spiritual, they group upstage left—chest lifted and heads bobbing. Wilson remains furiously at work, impossibly stuffing heaps of tinsel into the suitcase. He rolls it offstage—a traveler in search of Moses.

The dancers, all dressed in red, scoop and carve the empty space—reaching down to clasp the air, lifting it up, watching it drop, cradling a child and carefully tiptoeing backwards. We first see the sequence in unison—then they dissipate into individual timing. After the first few repetitions, I soon notice that one person at a time leads the group into the next series of movements. Just as quickly as I notice, the leader organically changes, and my eye focuses on a new Moses.

Throughout the seventy minute program, I recognize themes repeated over and over again: clasped hands, bowed heads, expansive leaps dropping onto one knee, a single file line parting to let others through. They are all Moses(es), parting the red sea, kneeling in prayer, leading the group through vast terrains of perpetual motion. Stillness is rare and fleeting. They push forward tirelessly, their rituals extending into song.

Three dancers watch from downstage—they are the audience now. Like us, they are seated and observant as the performers upstage burst forth in movement. Wilson is the first to stand up, taking the lead, walking directly through the center, miraculously missing the movers' flying limbs. The dancers one by one slip down to their sides, and the lights fade on a final glimpse of stillness.

We are all Moses. It is our time to lead.

Moses(es), Reggie Wilson/Fist and Heel Performance Group, Suzanne Roberts Theatre, September 19-21, 8pm,

<http://fringearts.ticketleap.com/moseses/>

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