

thINKingDANCE

Upping the ante on dance coverage and conversation



Photo: Bill Herbert

Danse4Nia Repertory Ensemble

By Kariamuwelsh

The Danse4Nia Repertory Ensemble presented its sixth season, “eMerge: The Concert”, on Sunday, November 6 at the Plays and Players Main Stage. Four choreographers: C. Gilmore (artistic director of Danse4Nia), Meredith Rainey, Bill Thomas and Hollie Wright presented works on this program and Danielle Currica was featured as a guest artist.

Danse4Nia is a well-trained group of seven women. Each choreographer took advantage of the dancers’ skill to perform turns, arabesques, back hinges and pitches while putting his or her individual stamp on the capable dancers. The dancers shared a movement vocabulary that highlighted their technical abilities.

Takiyah Nur Amin performed text by poet Maya Angelou in Rainey’s work, “Caged.” In this work an interesting juxtaposition of shapes and gestures interfaced with the rhythms of the music. The dark lighting and the steel blue/gray dresses gave it a cool look that accompanied the soft passion of the movements. The sounds of birds opened the piece and images of caged or free birds were woven throughout. “Caged” developed thematically with a cohesive continuity. The dancers, who performed beautifully, went to the very edge of the stage at one point grasping the floor with their feet. The dancers stepped into the audience’s space bringing the concept of freedom to our metaphorical doorstep.

Emerging choreographer Wright created a new work "Standing in my Skin." The dance, a mélange of music and movements, made use of costumes as prop. Kitschy raincoats worn by all of the dancers represented a peeling off of layers that suggested more layers and more uncovering, or perhaps a baring of one's soul. Wright infused her piece with West African stylistic motifs and some jazz oeuvres, which added life and dynamism to the more classical and even-toned movements. She interjected a hip phrase performed by each of the women at different times that unified the dancers with a sassy flourish.

At times, the dancing was a cacophony of sounds and movements without a center, but that seemed to be the point. It was as if they were saying, "Catch our spirit if you can!" In one sensuous moment in this work filled with flurries of motion, the dancers walked slowly and deliberately downstage with their backs to the audience. The music credit of "Various Artists" for Wright's piece was curious as a program note. Each composer or musician whose music was used merited mention.

Two works "Better to have Loved" (a Work in Progress), choreographed by Gilmore, and "Descending, Ascending" by Thomas finished out the program. Choreographed to music composed by Phillip Glass, the latter focused on three dancers, costumed in short colorful shirts that skimmed the top of their hips and allowed their legs maximum freedom.

Danse4Nia's strong ensemble focused on each other throughout the performance as they created intricate spatial and overlapping patterns. Jamey L. Rislin danced with force, nuance and power and stood out from the ensemble. Guest artist Currica blended beautifully into the cast and at the same time distinguished herself in her solos.

An interesting mix of classical modern movement with contemporary dance elements and personal overtones gave the evening an elegant and understated tone. Repetition of the same movement vocabulary from work to work created some ennui by the end of the performance. Danse4Nia's voice nonetheless danced with power and purpose.

Danse4Nia, "eMerge: The Concert", November 6 at the Plays and Players Main Stage. No further performances.

By Kariamu Welsh (1949-2021)

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