

thINKingDANCE

Upping the ante on dance coverage and conversation



Plate 3 Photography

The Pleasing, Profound, and Peculiarity of 4pm

By Kat J. Sullivan

Few performances are best viewed in the afternoon, but *Hold Still While I Figure This Out* is one of them. Proscenium shows, nocturnal under common circumstances, can seem off-kilter in the daylight. I would liken it to having a glass of dry red wine with breakfast; the senses have not yet warmed themselves up enough to effectively absorb the experience. It's a tad odd.

For Subcircle, this works in their favor.

The Glass Factory, if you are like me and haven't yet had an opportunity to venture there, is a renovated old garage lined with brick, situated on a tough-looking block in Brewerytown. It feels cavernous and somewhat industrial, yet inhabited, largely due to the scenic design. Objects perch or tumble over one another in piles: a rack of clothes in faded jewel tones; a hollow wooden staircase piece that would come up to about waist height; layers of collaged photos covering a corner of the stage and a patch of wall; snakes of rope hanging from the rafters; and more; and others. To the right of the stage stands a mic (teeming with potential, in my mind) and Jorge Cousineau. (He will remain there until the end, performing the sound design for the piece live).

The piece begins when Niki Cousineau, Christy Lee, and Scott McPheeters find their way on stage and collect alongside the images on the floor. They kneel, hunched, and appear to discuss the pictures between themselves, occasionally rearranging a paper here to there. When they eventually disperse, McPheeters goes to the mic; his quiet mumblings are folded into the subtle thrum of a sound loop already in play. Cousineau and Lee move boxes out into the space; McPheeters and Lee head to the clothing rack and yank a red leotard over Lee's head, closing the crotch snaps over her already-tomato pants. The dance has already been underway for a few minutes when the lead-in to a folk-y song unexpectedly pops on. The singer counts in, "One, two, one two three four"; but just as we anticipate the beginning of the downbeat, Cousineau yanks on a dangling rope and abruptly shuts off the music. It's hilarious.

Thus, we enter the strange little world that is *Hold Still While I Figure This Out*. The dance incorporates familiar pedestrian locomotions (the dancers walk, they run, they giggle at the absurdity of it all) and peculiar little tics (they spring into the air, rigid like pencils, to the beat of a peppy tune, until Cousineau and McPheeters pause to glare at Lee). Its surreal quality, so heightened by the afternoon haze, stems from its similarity to the “real world” peppered with quirks and glitches. It is bit tongue-in-cheek at moments; although I’m not quite sure whose mouth we’re in.

A favorite moment: McPheeters, Lee, and Cousineau are all in dresses now. Lee and Cousineau have climbed into the shell of the wooden staircase, now turned on its side. They turn and toss, trying to find a comfortable alignment of two bodies in the angular bowels of the box. Settling on their left sides, one fitting against the other like two spoons, they look oddly like synchronized swimmers for a moment: their arms parallel to one another’s, gazing upstage at McPheeters and his delightfully garish magenta shift dress. He darts at them, hopping comically to grab a rope extending from one side of the stage to the other in his teeth, and slides it back and forth with maniacal eyes. Lee and Cousineau slap their synchronized hands on the floor and staircase in approval.

The transitions between scenes are thick and viscous, like molasses dripping down an hourglass. I am totally aware when the dance is passing through one; they feel slow and nurtured and unhurried. It is a dance of mild idiosyncrasy, enhanced by the dancers’ subtle balance between logicity and lunacy.

“Do dances normally forgo chronological linearity?” my friend asks me afterwards as we exit into the afternoon.

Hold Still While I Figure This Out, Subcircle, The Glass Factory, June 4-5. http://www.danceboxoffice.com/?js_events=subcircle-hold-still-while-i-figure-this-out

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