



Theater

Tara lee Burns Choreography and PM Dance Co.

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**Tara lee Burns Choreography and PM Dance Co.**

Philip Montana and Tara Lee Burns presented a spectacular evening of abstract dance, variously fused media and themed choreography. The two distinctly separate performances took place at the small but charming Red Bean Studio Theater in midtown Manhattan. Both segments were arranged in a modern manner and created their own unique presence and impact. The set designs for each piece were simple and current yet simultaneously tasteful and timeless creating a balanced mix of classic influences and contemporary art. The dances were highlighted and exaggerated by the presence of multimedia which served as a strong mood setting component to an already interesting visual experience.

Tara Lee Choreography presented the world premier of 'The Making of Statues'. It was a rather beautiful and elegant performance that was delicate but powerful. In a dark lit room, transposing or perhaps gliding bodies swayed, struggled and transcended the boundaries of reality. A large projector that makes a frequent appearance in Tara's pieces and carefully selected music that almost always accompanies her choreography was strategically creating a rather mystical ambiance that was very purposefully triggering the audiences emotional side and love of beauty simply for its own sake.

Philip Montana's PM Dance Company premiered a representational yet abstract depiction of modern life and it's confines on the human experience. It was a cleverly mindful performance that evoked the feeling of familiarity and relation to the piece but remained distant enough mentally to be aloof and recondite. The raw elements of his performance were complemented by the precise choreography and created a very dramatic influence on the senses. The music that accompanied his performance was perfect for creating the organized chaos highlighted in Philips work.

'The Making of Statues' was a classic, Greco-Roman inspired fantasy of pagan goddesses projected into a non-concrete, abstract environment. Here each goddess was able to identify, represent, express and experience a wide spectrum of hypothetical states. Every raw and primal emotion was awakened. The resulting effect was sensual, sexual, rough and even romantic at times. The dance movements for the piece were not random, they were elaborately planned and deliberate despite representing an aloof and instinct-driven collage. Everything was intentional from the general stance of the dancers to the gentle curves of the their fingers.

PM Dance Company, founded by Montana presented a very different style of performance. The concept was to recreate an environment where an exploration of physical and emotional confounds of the human experience could be showcased. It was a piece based in reality although depicted in an abstract manner. It was systematic, organized and fused with many familiar instances. An ongoing psychological debate of nature versus nurture seems to somehow dominate the piece and the dance reflects in perfectly. Many very carefully rehearsed overhead kicks, fluid mixes of sharp and smooth angles and the balance focused posing definitely conveyed the feeling of conflict with a hint of dangerous beauty.

It was interesting to learn the inspirations for the performances. In July of 2009 Tara started brainstorming this project. Initially trusting her instinct that she will be able to create something awesome she played around with a few different ideas. In dance, certain poses or arrangements are sometimes stacked away to be used in more relevant pieces, some of these were finally utilized for Tara. Yet to give her performance an angle or suggestive storyline she researched the actual possess Greco- Roman deities were depicted in Classical art. Suddenly the celestial randomness depicted is actually a very noble and creative expression of artistic tribute.

Montana rooted his show in the familiar and concrete. The cool- beige kind of bleak setting was the modern representation of the notoriously hectic atmosphere of glorious Manhattan. Philip specifically designed his dance to portray a feeling of anxiety, an ambush-style tug of war that physically and mentally serves as a constant element of existence here. He very mindfully demonstrated that individuals are shaped, influenced and frequently thrust about in the NY environment. Through dance he was able to convey the emotional as well as psychological impacts existing here can create.

The choreographers enlisted the help of a few rather talented performers to actualize their visions. Courtney Baron, Megan Hillman Bascom, Julie Bordonaro, Robin Neveu Brown, Diana Deaver and Audry Lane Ellis were all magical and captivating. Although most of the spectacle is accredited to the actual choreographers/ dancers Tara Lee and Philip Montana, the purely physical pragmatism of the dancers was evident and needed for the show to become successful. The choreographers are strong dancers in their own right and bring creative energy to the pieces, the level of which other dancers have to maintain. The performers were athletic, graceful and precise.

In Modern art, understanding the meaning of the piece is secondary to an emotional experience. Choreographers are more concerned with creating an impact on the physical and emotional senses than catering to the audiences cognitive comprehension of the material. Yet attempting to grasp the message seems important since it was not chaos that was depicted. The mistake frequently made by those who are not big fans of modern performance, is that they believe there is nothing relatable in what they see, yet it's unfortunate because the creative tones and the noble inspirations for such art is what keeps our imaginations sharp.