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Dance Review: Monk's Mood, Thomas DeFrantz at Joyce SoHo

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As I walk into the Joyce SoHo the stage is already preset sparking my interest as to what is about to come. A chair, a hanging dress and hat, a projection screen, and a coat stand with various coats and hats hang upon it. Hmmmm, I wonder... I also notice panels on the ground and wonder what they are for. The lights go down and Thomas DeFrantz walks out and takes his position.

The show begins and the audience is taken on an abstract journey into the mind of Thelonius Monk. We are literally looking into the apartment of Monk as DeFrantz expresses the different emotions and memories of certain important players that have inspired Monk throughout his lifetime.

The scenery is funky. Through tap dance and an occasional passé or battement, DeFrantz expresses a period where Monk is frustrated from being "passed over" for young musicians as well as an artistic love for his muse, Billy Holiday. DeFrantz approaches a picture of Holiday and "plucks" a gardenia from her picture in reference.

At another point, he shows Monk's admiration for his wife in a very creative way by picking up a dress hanging in the background and begins to do a sort of abstract ballroom dance with the dress occasionally throwing in a shuffle or two. For a one man show, this sequence is a very creative and interactive way to show love for a woman.



Photo: Monk's Mood by Thomas DeFrantz. Choreography: Thomas DeFrantz. Photo: J. Fisher and Erica L. Smith. Photo: J. Fisher and Erica L. Smith. Photo: J. Fisher and Erica L. Smith.

Delightfully imaginative, we see monk dance happily around his apartment as a "parade of musicians." At other times, DeFrantz exhibits unhappiness and sits depressed in his chair. Overall, the piece creates an emotional aftertaste that leaves the audience with the spirit of Monk. And, for those who don't know about the man, you need to get on it!



The most intriguing part of the piece and focus of the work is the technology used. At various points in the evening DeFrantz interplays with projection and music creating a composition that is unique to every evening of performance. Each panel triggers a prerecorded visual and/or audio sequence that DeFrantz is in control. The panels are connected to a laptop where Eto Oro, the media artist who collaborated with DeFrantz on this project, monitors the media and only interacts if there is glitch.

The technology platform is created through a program at Massachusetts Institute of Technology that DeFrantz created called SLIPPAGE: Performance [Culture] Technology. This collective's goal at M.I.T. is to "stage alternative histories of race, sexuality, gender, performance, and technology."

What an innovative idea!

In a post performance discussion DeFrantz expresses the purpose of the project and his hopes that other performers will be inspired to use the platform that he has created. This project seems very promising and is an important new addition to the history of dance and performance in general.



iDANZ Critix Corner
Official Dance Review by JoiLynn
Performance: Monk's Mood
Choreographer: Thomas DeFrantz
Venue: Joyce SoHo, New York City, NY
Date: December 11th, 2009
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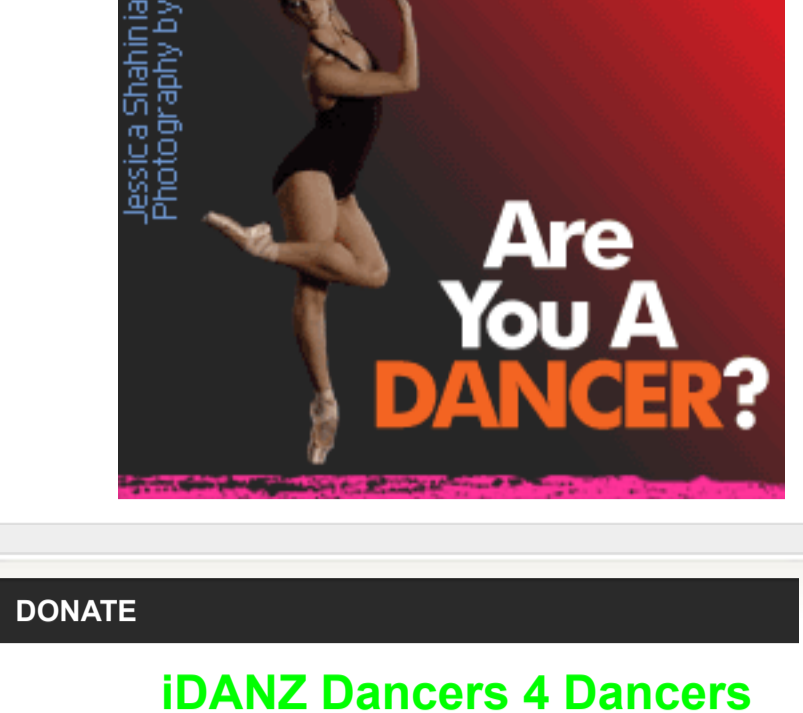
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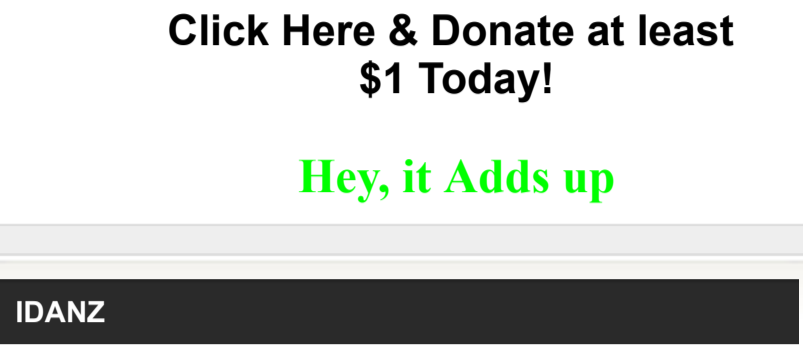
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Announcements: John Byrne's Transcending Form premieres at Theatre 80, June 2 - August 24, 2011 Produced by David LaChapelle in collaboration with Fred Tones Updated: May 25, 2011

Choreographer John Byrne presents the world premiere of his first full-length dance work, Transcending Form, this summer at Theatre 80. A work for eight dancers, Transcending Form is set [...]

Dance Review: Blues, Rock, and Rachmaninov! - Complexions at The Joyce Theater On opening night of the Complexions Fall/Winter season at The Joyce Theater, the audience comprised with many power players of the dance world, not only buzzes with excitement and anticipation, but also disappointment. We hear that dance royalty, the breathtaking brilliant and talented, Desmond Richardson, is suffering from an injury (received earlier in the afternoon [...])

Dance Review: Treeline's Show and Tell: the Proper Way to Play Happy Birthday Treeline Dance Works! Although this one-year-old company may be just a baby on the dance scene, kiddos look out because she is growing in vigorous leaps and bounds... quite literally, in fact! Her first full-length show, In Transit, demonstrates how technical prowess can meet child-like playfulness. Throughout, dancers play their bodies like musical instruments [...]

Dance Review: Eric Taylor Dance, Pushing Boundaries Eric Taylor Dance wraps up an amazing sold-out run at Joyce Soho in Spectacular fashion. With excitement, grace, power, and beauty, this is a company to watch. The company, consisting of Isabelle Fernandez, Gierre Godley, Dillon Horniker, Carly Mayer, Michelle Pelizon and Danielle Schulz, is filled with excellent performers exhibiting with "no holds back" what [...]

Dance Review: Neil Greenberg - Saggy-Crotch Tights are the Cats Pajamas! By George-or better yet, by Merce-Neil Greenberg's got good design. This former Cunningham dancer not only knows how to make a fashion statement, but also how to make statement, a fashion. His past works have made quite the mark, inviting audience members to question status-quo gender roles, ponder common assumptions about HIV/AIDS, and interrogate what [...]

In Memoriam: Floor-Barre® LEGEND ZENA ROMMETT DIES AT 90 Floor-Barre® LEGEND ZENA ROMMETT DIES AT 90 Zena Rommett, who has been credited with expanding and extending some of this century's great dancers and athletes, died Wednesday November 10 at 1:26 PM in New York City. The cause was recurring cancer. Ms. Rommett was 90. Memorial services will be held on Sunday November 14 [...]

Dance Review: The Strong and the Beautiful, Cedar Lake at The Joyce Well, what's there not to say about Cedar Lake Contemporary Ballet? A diverse repertory company of exquisite technical beasts would be dream and playground for any guest choreographer; on, so it seems, based on the three works on the bill (Sunday Again, Unit in Reaction, and Huubdu) for one of their evenings at the Joyce [...]

Dance Review: Garth Fagan Dance at The Joyce Garth Fagan Dance celebrates its 40th Anniversary this week at the Joyce. The Rochester-based company, famous for its modern-meets-ballet-meets-Afro-Caribbean aesthetic, delivers a varied program through Sunday. It revives several company classics, premieres two new works, and introduces the choreography of company member Norwood Pennevell. These are some hits and misses in this ambitious line-up. The [...]

Dance Review: Cedar Lake Contemporary Ballet at The Joyce Cedar Lake Contemporary Ballet, the ultra-sexy company formed by Wat-Mant heiress Nancy Laurie, burst onto the scene in 2003, garnering innumerable Dance Magazine covers and glowing reviews. On Wednesday night, I impatiently awaited the rise of the curtain on the company's second program of their fall season at The Joyce. The bill featured the company [...]

Class Watch: Camille Brown, "Keep It Simple, Keep It Real and Give a Tendu Soul" A major concept that's branded on your body after taking a Camille Brown master class is that you can get a lot out of the simplest steps by adding soul. Whether it's injecting a little spirit into the rond de jambe that flirtatiously traces circles on the ground, the port de bras that resists each [...]

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