

Kerri Hughes

On December 6th I attended the Improv. Festival of NY, at St. Marks Church in the Bowery. Danspace presented it. The show ran a little over an hour.

The first performance was danced by Sarah Rudner. She wore black leggings and a black sports bra top. She was hooked up to a machine that was playing her heartbeat. The lighting was simple white lights from the side and a white spotlight. I don't feel that the lighting affected the mood of the dance at all. It felt like watching an assembly in my high school auditorium. She seemed to be interpreting the movements of a heart. She used the entire floor space, which was good. She didn't have the difference in levels I was hoping for. She basically spent the dance in the middle level. Her footwork was incredible; I've never seen feet move so fast. What made her feet stand out so much were the soft, slow movements her arms and torso were making. Her sound of her lone heartbeat gradually blended with a man discussing the functions of her heart. As the performance went on another man and a woman joined in and began to count out of sync. This made me nervous. I felt it represented the stress that we go through in our daily lives. Her movements became more exaggerated and sped up. Then a man started playing a jazzy song on the saxophone and I felt better. It was a calming song that had a sense of longing. I was picturing her dancing alone in her apartment to a song she used to listen to with her lover. At one point she just sat on the floor and watched the man playing. It gave me a sense that she was experiencing self awareness. She then began to dance again and out of no where she walked over to the machine, turned it off and nodded. I really liked that ending. It was as if she was ~~Be Be Miles and David Teason performed this~~ second piece I will discuss. I thoroughly enjoyed this piece because it gave me the opportunity to watch what we've been learning in class. I know it's unlikely but I felt that with enough practice I would be able to perform a lot of the dance. Both dancers wore black pants and orange tops. I enjoyed this costume choice because it allowed me to appreciate the choreography for what it was without

the distraction of flashy costumes. The lighting was simple as well. They had a soft white spotlight on the dancers and soft purple lighting from the sides. It created a romantic atmosphere that went along with the dance itself. I felt that the dance was a representation of the cycle of a romantic relationship. There were high and low points in the dance just like in real life. The music didn't seem to fit the choreography in my opinion; it may be due to the fact that the night was an improv performance. The music kept changing from classical to Spanish but until the end their moves didn't show a change. They used the floor space very well. They covered the entire floor. In fact they spent a lot of time actually on the floor. I enjoyed that. There was a lot of contact between the dancers. Most of the performance was done touching each other. At one point the choreography seemed to be simulating sex. It was sensual and arousing without being vulgar or perverted. During the entire piece I felt as though I was intruding on the dancers' privacy. At one point in the dance David removed an imaginary hair from BeBe's shoulder and she brushed his hand away. I'm not sure why but at that moment a tear rolled down my cheek. It was just a beautiful representation of a relationship between a man and a woman. They used counterpoint well. Whenever they weren't touching each other they were doing their own moves. This helped them with the dynamic changes because if BeBe was dancing fast David was usually doing something slow and vice versa. The seating arrangement was almost that of theater in the round, so there was no set front of the stage. The dancers made good use of this arrangement by focusing their attention equally to all sides of the audience. I enjoyed the story their dance seemed to be telling: A couple starts dating, gets physical, things get weird between them, they fight, break up, make up, live happily ever after. It was very moving.

The third and final performance was by Kim Epifano. I have to say that I think I found my idol. She was incredible. She wore a black and silver sequined dress. The lighting was more reflective of the mood of the piece than in the others. What made me like this performance so much was that she was singing. The music changed drastically and often in this piece. It varied from Amazing Grace to The Beatles's "All we are saying." The piece

started in complete darkness with the sounds of people whispering in the background. It gave me a feeling of confusion, and anticipation. Orange lights came on and this woman starts screaming "everyone has something to say!" As soon as she said that I knew I was in for an interesting ride. She was doing cartwheels and flips as is she was participating in a gymnastic competition, not a dance concert. She did a lot of contracting. She definitely used the floor space well. She even went up on the "alter" and was using the walls to hold her self up. The lighting seemed to coincide with her movements in many ways. For instance if she was in a white spotlight and paused for a moment she always held a symmetrical pose, where as in the colored spotlights she held asymmetrical poses. She rolled down the stairs to a piece of music that made me feel like she was loosing her sanity. There was the sound of glass breaking and she was laughing maniacally. Out of nowhere the music changed to a lounge music style song with a piano and saxophone playing. She began dancing very seductively and it gave me a sense of loneliness. She kept laughing and giggling through out the piece while spouting philosophical statements about the space-time continuum. At this point I realized it was like watching someone who was either on a recreational drug or a schizophrenic. It was a very fun piece and the audience was laughing almost non-stop. She did a series of forced arch pliates across the floor, and sashayed back. I liked that amongst all the confusion and laughter I recognized things from class. She had a good use of levels as well. There were lots of leaps and she spent a lot of time on the floor as well. She combined soft, fluid movements of her right arm with harsh jerky movements of her left leg.

Occasionally there were cowbells in the background. She definitely reminded me of the character Maureen from RENT. She did one move and I thought I was watching ice-skating. She did a series of spins on one foot that went from slow to fast and then she fell to floor (on purpose). Although I said that there was confusion in the dance it was always clear that she as a character knew what she was doing until the end. The end was as if she'd come undone. She'd been holding on to her sanity by a thread and it just snapped. She was almost sobbing and singing "Hush Little Baby" while rocking herself onto the floor. Then she got up and did

cartwheels up the stairs and slid down the wall while saying “all we are saying.” When she finished the audience erupted into applause and I was very disappointed that it was over.

All in all it was a very interesting experience and I can't wait to attend another modern dance performance.