

thINKingDANCE

Upping the ante on dance coverage and conversation



Photo: Raphael Xavier

Provocation and Delight with Metal & Kind

by Janna Meiring

Metal & Kind's Indestructible Flowers is billed as a “collage of new solo work designed for folks secretly underwhelmed by new solo work.” The duo Lily Kind and Mark “Metal” Wong have concocted a mix that satisfies an urban sensibility with the flavors of an old-school slumber party. While the piece has loose ends, I don’t mind. In fact, it’s part of the charm. A story glues the piece together; goofy-non-sensical-ecstatic-dancing and slowly induced audience participation make me giddy with delight.

In a room full of folks from 6 to 76 (rough guess), we are handed a sheet of paper—copied out of a coloring book—with instructions to decorate the crab-body with crayons. Metal and Kind give us ample time to acclimate to their playful, tactile world.

The anchoring story is Metal’s boyhood task of killing crabs in his backyard, translated first into b-boy form. He rolls his lower body over his shoulder and stops mid-air, props his whole body up on one hand, then slaps the floor firmly as he chases his imaginary target. Later, the meaning is unpacked through creative story-telling as he uses his hands to mimic crabs crawling across the floor or up his body. He invites the audience to participate in a Star Trek re-enactment (a life-long dream): we shake and throw ourselves from one side or the other with impact to the “ship.” He shares a prophetic dream that leads to his ending the backyard extinction of the Bermuda land crab. His way is easy and accessible, as both a dancer and story-teller.

Kind gently swishes her fingertips in a wave that travels up her arms and flashes a broad smile. Her elements offer clever, sometimes spastic queries into age and surviving as a dance artist. With a confrontationally joyous spirit, she exudes the seriousness and ridiculousness of this topic through choreography and improvisation. Wearing ski goggles and track-pants, to music provided by an audience DJ, she leaps into the air in high tuck jumps from side to side as she stares us down. In between, she responds to questions from the audience. “What is your advice to artists?” “Go back in time and be better at practicing,” she says in a stuffy-nose voice.

At the end, the entire audience learns basic steps: march in place, windshield wiper hands, bend side-side-front-back, raise hands up in crab arms. Our last time repeating the phrase, we are on our own—our leaders have vanished. This multi-disciplinary dance piece may be family-friendly, but it is imbued with the energy of provocation.

[*Metal and Kind's Indestructible Flowers*](#), Urban Movement Arts, Sept. 22, 23 & 29, 30.

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