

thINKingDANCE

Upping the ante on dance coverage and conversation



Photo: Amancay Candal Tribe

Young Artists Digging In

by P. Graham

Hilary Pierce is a vision in her large, sculptural robe for *Monolith*, resembling both a mountain and the peasant living at its base. Red yarn hair grows down from a head piece that frames her face in a semi-circle. Her precise, delicate hand and head movements contrast with her mountainous shape. After the show, Pierce explains that she was influenced by both Butoh and Kabuki artists— She modeled her movement on the work of Kabuki [onnagata](#) Bando Tamasaburo. There is a weird unrealness to her glide across the space that looks more puppet-like than fleshy. Her tilted head adds to the effect and draws me into the action. I'd like to see more, especially in the relationship of her figure to the space.

Pierce performs another solo, this one a body-baring belly dance. She deftly calibrates her movements, parsing elements of American and Egyptian Belly dance, utilizing pleasing stillnesses in contrast with snaky arms and torso. She moves across space in what looks like a multitude of tiny steps, hips level as a tray carrying tea. Later we see the steps with an up/down movement in the hips, the contrast in just this one element a pleasure and a revelation. Strong in the visual elements of her work, Pierce tends to wander a bit about the space. It might help her to think of the space as a design element as well, even if the dance is somewhat improvised.

In *Nothing More Nothing*, Claire Pitts embodies the rebel clown. She describes herself as “a visual artist gone rogue” and delights in playing the trickster, morphing through states of being in which she pushes her body and voice into grotesque languages. Lowering herself from a trancelike, open-mouthed standing posture into a deep squat, she acts out self-stimulation and suggests sexual divination, embodying both Goddess and clown. Pitts studied rituals of possession within numerous cultures and uses that as a jumping off point for her piece. Doused in white body makeup and white clothing, she performs absurdist behaviors and makes provocative statements: “Know what? You are Jesus.” She answers a cartoonish cardboard phone with a cartoony voice, “Helloooooo,” and voices the caller with muffled rhythms. Most of her other activities are more mysterious. Several audience members laugh hysterically at her; others watch silently.

Amancay Candal Tribe rounds out the program with two solos exploring the relationship of fabric to the dancing body. In *Copper Orbits* she investigates the use of a silk scarf, mining its molten liquidity through spiraling turns and body rolls. In *Golden Vortex* the “wings” she manipulates look distinctly ancient Egyptian, in contrast to the western musical accompaniment. Both of her works seem dependent on the music for every gesture and body rhythm. Unpacking this relationship could be the starting point for deeper explorations.

2 for 1: Elementals & Nothing More Nothing, 954 Dance Movement Collective, September 11-12. <http://fringearts.com/event/2-for-1-elementals-in-motion-more-nothing-more-09-12-14/>

By Patricia Graham
September 14, 2014