

# 1993-1996 Reperformance: It Could Have Been Different/Suspending and Other Tricks

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Karen Bernard is aging more adventurously and creatively than most choreographers who still perform and make work into their sixties. She is a savvy producer too, and her Performance Mix Festival, going into its 29<sup>th</sup> year, gives opportunities for dancers of all ages to experiment, perform and get paid. She runs forums as well, goes to dance festivals all over the world, and is a frequent guest at artist colonies.

In the Gospel according to Bernard, there is room for all dancers/choreographers getting old. It has been no secret that what Bernard is fascinated by is the aging, changing body and how it carries on in motion, and she has made it her mission to prove dance is not just a young gal's game.

Yet, with all that she does in the name of dance, her true love is that of a solo performer. Her most recent concert at Triskelion in Williamsburg, Brooklyn, an evening of her reconstructed solos from the 1990s, set on four young dancers, featured a current new piece made in the present for hers truly.

Bernard's 1990s work is what she chose to reconstruct for four young dancers to "re-perform" in this most recent outing. Time never stands still and neither does Karen Bernard.

The hour opened with a screen of grainy footage, edited seamlessly by Than Wixon, of the young svelte Bernard performing solos she choreographed for herself in the years 1993-1996. We of the packed audience in raked seating were about to see in real time the same dances performed by the younger dancers. That footage set the scene for what followed, an unusual opening in the name of reconstruction.

The fun of this opening also featured the same gorgeous now vintage costumes constructed by Liz Prince for Bernard which surely belong in the Met's Costume Collection one day. They held up from the 90s beautifully. "*1993-1996 It Could Have Been Different*" was the title of the reconstruction "re-performances" (I love that word) made me wonder exactly what could have been different. By the end of this engaging hour, the lady of the night appeared herself, in her new solo "Suspending and Other Tricks" in a black sheath sexy costume slowly, demurely, moving step by lugging step, closer to the audience. Bernard clearly enjoys performing and uses multi-media such as film, to shape her art.

The lucky young dancers who fit perfectly into the original Prince costumes were Stacy Lynn Smith, Donna Costello, Jil Guyon, Lisa Parra and Ryan Migge. My favorite was Bernard's filmed first more "dancy" dance titled "Footsteps of the...." where she is wiggling up- down- sideways horizontally wearing the delightful funny original black and yellow toy-like circular spiral loopy dress; soon we see Stacy Lynn-Smith perform the dance with the most stunning shaped triangled Afro I have ever seen. It gave the dance a fresh look, but kept the original feeling a la Bernard.

Aging itself is a very mysterious process. after all, looking back, wondering forward, feeling there is mortality or immortality (if you believe in that), and trying to live in the present. Was the "It could have been different" difference referring to her own aging process, the theme in much of her work?

The process of revisiting, reconstructing, re-performing older work is still a mystery to me. Reconstruction loses something, but in this concert, it felt like the dancers were able to capture Bernard's original choreographies to the max.