

Dance review: Performance Mix Festival 2010

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Joyce Soho, New York City

Luka Kito, copyright 2010

Performance Mix Festival, celebrating its twenty-fourth installment, presented over thirty dance, music, video, and interdisciplinary artists from around the world during April 13th to 18th, 2010, at [Joyce Soho](#). The festival was presented by the organization [New Dance Alliance](#), fostering a forum to expose audiences to new works while providing services to advance artists' careers.

On Sunday, April 18th at 3:00 PM, the line up of artists who performed were three New York City artists: Brynne Billingsley, Jody Sperling/[Time Lapse Dance](#), and Kristi Spessard Dance Projects; one Utah artist: Ashley Anderson; one Vancouver group: MOVE: the company.

The concert opened with a solo by Kristi Spessard, who collaborated with Jeanne Trevers on its creation. The title was *Tremor*, and Kristi began the solo with pulses and contorted gestures to the sound of amplified breathing. This dance began slowly in a spotlight, the dancer appearing strung up like a puppet as if being moved by some outside force. This activity accumulated until the dancer burst out of the spot light and into the general stage space. Evocative of [Mary Wigman](#), the dancer dropped into a low squat readdressing the opening contorted gestures. There was a brief ecstatic tossing of her body, resolving into a return to the original motif of the dance.

Kristi Spessard choreographed the second piece, *Karo*. It opened with two dancers, one male and one female, with their backs to the audience in a provocative entanglement. The costumes had a rural aesthetic, creating a down home erotic image to open the piece. The woman bent over and dipped her finger into a bottle of Karo syrup

while the man embraced her intimately. They began partnering continuously with a heavily weighted and animalistic quality. It accelerated into wrestling with one another like angry co-dependent partners, finally calming down into a clearly identifiable waltz section. The bottle of Karo was further accessed throughout the dance suggesting the metaphor that relationships can be “sticky” and addictive. The music was a vocal piece that repeated a phrase to exhaustion, sometimes upstaging the dance in its incessancy.

This dance review continues with two more installments of the article, examining the artists who presented April 18th, 2010, at the Performance Mix Festival at Joyce Soho.

The third piece in the concert, *Elbow Tow Blues*, started out with a fan blowing. A woman, Brynne Billingsley, set herself up in the blackout wearing an enormous costume. When the lights went up her upper body was hidden, only exposing a giant skirt suspended up by the air produced by the fan, looking like a jellyfish. Soon after she rose up appearing as a woman. She did a virtuosic back bend before transitioning away from the fan and further out into space. It became clear that the dance was about the costume and its accessories. Once she had finished with manipulating the massive skirt, she removed it as well as a necklace of pearls, which she proceeded to dance with, pressing the pearls to her bosom and limbs. Finally, she discarded the pearls and finished stripped of props but still in front of the fan blowing what was left of her while the lights faded out.

Next was *Mermaid Parade*, a duet by Josh Beamish who also performed in the piece. It opened with a female dancer, Cristina Graziano, staggering in her pointe shoes. She circled her pelvis repeatedly with her back to the audience. As she turned around, her long hair was unfastened, masking her face. She continued to stumble in her pointe shoes, appearing to attempt to access the function of her legs, yet falling continually to the ground in dismay, evoking the image of a mermaid just getting her human legs. When the male dancer came out he began to partner the female, but with an unusually indifferent manner. The two dancers began to struggle with one another, but the reason as to why they were struggling was ambiguous. It finished with both dancers separate from one another experiencing different physical states. The male was spasmodic while the female kept passing her fingers through her hair. Although initially compelling, the image of her fingers through the hair went on for too long, losing its potency.

Dead Dog Song, by Ashley Anderson, was a uniquely compelling duet. It opened with two dancers on stage, quietly present and physically still. One dancer began moving closer to the other dancer on stage. Her movements were like liquid. Both dancers’ costumes look like abstract schoolgirl uniforms. After the first dancer reached the second dancer, they continued together in repeated sequences of choreography on the floor from close to the audience to far upstage. Meanwhile the minimal music accompaniment was looped, enhancing the repetition of the dancers movements, yet never in the same manner. Their dancing was smooth and detailed, offering a stunning simplicity. They performed with considered intention, drawing the viewer into their mysterious world. This duet was reminiscent of [Postmodern dance](#) aesthetics where the performers’ tasks created the content of the piece. Finally and whimsically, the dancers rolled onto their backs with what appeared to be wax paper and vocalized tones through the paper with their mouths that caused the paper to vibrate and buzz. As a few audience members giggled the lights went out.

The last piece in the concert was choreographed by Jody Sperling and performed by students from Barnard Columbia College. It was entitled *Ghosts Revisited (2008/2010)*. The piece began with a solo dancer onstage, performing a series of linear movements. Another dancer entered cloaked in beautiful flowing fabric with extended arm poles to increase the movement of the gown. This costume looks like homage to [Loie Fuller](#), one of the pioneers of Modern dance history. There were four episodes to this piece, clearly marked by blackouts. With each section the amount of dancers in flowing gowns increased as well as the variations of movements produced by the costumes. Initially symmetrical and in unison, the manipulation of the fabric grew in complexity, finishing with glorious spinning images like tulips or blown glass. Other images the piece seemed reminiscent of were traditional Korean dance as well as Turkish whirling dervishes. The only unnecessary element of the piece was the three blackouts, which seemed to confuse and disorient the audience.