REVIEW: PERFORMANCE MIX 2013

The Music of Dance

Performance Mix 27, Tap-flavored, at the Flea

By QUINN BATSON

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Tap is often the forgotten cousin of dance, viewed as a little out of date or slightly vaudevillian, but it is definitely part of the family. Karen Bernard/New Dance Alliance’s diverse "Performance Festival" gave an afternoon to tap, and tap gave back. Michela Marino Lerman, Cheryl Johnson and Roxane Butterfly each made it clear that tap is meant to be performed to live jazz music.

With Theo Hill on piano and Ryan Berg on bass, Michela Marino Lerman proposes Three Wishes: something inspired by a Rothschild in WWII; that we support jazz artists; and that music brings peace. Each wish gets its own dance, each more active than the last, until Lerman is shedding clothes and working big. The musicality and expressiveness of a serious tap dancer like Lerman is a bit eye-opening, as if the music is flowing through her body out to us. Her bio goes back to Sesame Street at age 5, with writeups and honors coming in her mid-teens. She is "currently running the only weekly tap jam in NYC at Smalls Jazz Club."

PERFORMANCE MIX 2013

Choreography by: Roxane Butterfly, Cheryl Johnson, Michela Marino Lerman.
Produced by: Karen Bernard.
Dancers: Roxane Butterfly, Cheryl Johnson, Michela Marino Lerman.
Music by: Ryan Berg, Theo Hill, Danny Lopa, Gérard Faroux.
Lighting design by: Brian Aldous.
Production stage manager: Megan Byrne.

SCHEDULE
The Flea Theater
April 8-14, 2013
Cheryl Johnson begins *Continuum* with a tray of red sand and socks pulled over her tap shoes. This is surprising and delicately beautiful — softsoft shuffling, to tasty notes and harmonics by bassist Danny Lopa. And after the sand and socks are left behind, the performance continues to be so musical, incorporating claps and taps and voice. The music is attributed to Jaco Pastorius, but U2 seems to find its way in as well, perhaps part of the continuum. This is a striking piece, not least for the wonderful interplay between tap dancer and bassist. A nice ending touch by lighting designer Brian Aldous has green light fading quickly to black, which leaves magenta afterimages in our eyes.

And I've never seen Roxane Butterfly before but wish I had, after watching her perform and reading her bio. She has been literally all over the map and been involved in a wide range of the performing arts world, including the American Dance Festival and enough contemporary dance to be the first woman tap dancer to receive a Bessie Award. Here she teams up with the venerable Gérad Faroux on drums to give us an extemporaneous back-and-forth dialogue between taps and drums. Butterfly goes big on almost all her movements, never sacrificing rhythm in the process, an impressive feat.

All three tap dancers and MC Jane Goldberg join to dance as a group and take solos to the classic tap jazz song whose name eludes me, a charming sendoff to a charming evening.

**APRIL 24, 2013**

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