

# THE FIVE POINTS STAR

## *Some Duos Are More Dynamic Than Other Duos...*

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...but dynamism is not the only worthy quality in dance. As the 2015 American Dance Festival continues this week with four commissioned duets by paired choreographer/dancers, it offers us a chance to not only see new work unfettered by economic constraints, but to consider what we value in dance art. Whether we value any particular style or content in these new works, we ought to all value the fact that artists have been able to make them thanks to the support of the ADF. Last year, the ADF commissioned solos; this year duos—perhaps next year it will be trios. The Dynamic Duos program opened last night in Reynolds Theater, and will run through July 1.

I, for instance, greatly prefer dancing to talking in a dance work. Yet sometimes choreographers are able to introduce talking in ways that do not cancel out the communicativeness of the silent, speaking bodies, and combining the forms increases expressive power of both. Sometimes, though, more is less.



Jesse Zarrit, front, and Mark Haim premiered their **Golden Age** at ADF on 6/29/15  
Photo: Grant Halverson



Taryn Griggs, L, and Chris Yon in the premiere of **Conspicuous Birds** at ADF  
6/29/15 Photo: Grant Halverson

The program opens with a strange and wonderful work, *Golden Age*, by Mark Haim and Jesse Zaritt, that evokes superheroes—and Caravaggio. Roman ruins—and the city dump. The now—and the mist-shrouded past. It remarks on ever-ascendant youth, flaunting its glories over sturdy age. Mostly it manages this without words, relying instead on Zaritt's beautiful dancing body, limber and exuberant, and Haim's graceful, certain elegance of motion. Which age is golden, young or older, now or past? I'd see this again, except for the brutal after-effects of the heavy theatrical haze (that makes such wonderful stage pictures). More than 12 hours later, my eyes, throat and lungs still burn. Fortunately, *Golden Age* is highly memorable.

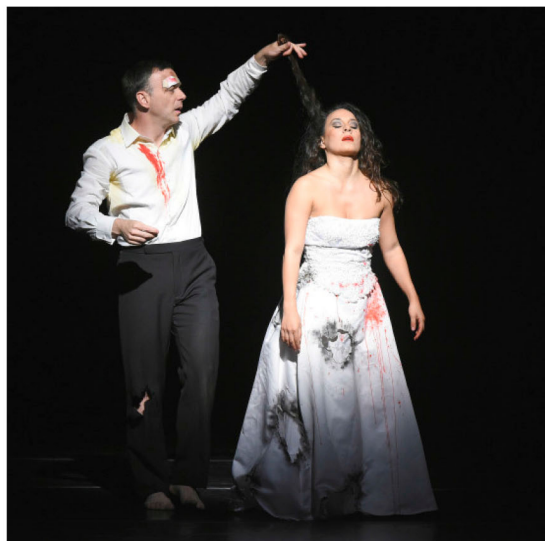
The same could not be said Taryn Griggs' and Chris Yon's *Conspicuous Birds*. The two dancers mimic various bird behaviors, while wearing fabulously glittering, wing-sleeved tops over dark pants (costumes by Tiny Yogg's Ma). The lighting plays marvelously on the fabrics as the dancers move. Clearly, they have closely observed many species of birds, and many of the movement patterns are true and charming. The problem is, the movement doesn't vary much, but it goes on for a long time. And nothing really happens, dramatically speaking.

After a rousing start with the Overture to Rossini's *The Barber of Seville*, *Small Stories* fell silent. Claire Porter and Sarah Juli stood far downstage, one on either side, in satin recital gowns, alternately mouthing words as a single spot alternately separated them from the darkness. The effect was similar to a flashing ad on a web page—very irritating. Eventually the volume increases to audible, but the language remains fragmentary a while longer before actual sentences emerge. After that, the experience is like catching bits of conversation in a moving crowd, or like listening to chickens cluck and fuss while pecking for food. When it got to the stage of the movement artists mockingly mouthing the words to “*Che Gelida Manina*,” (Pavarotti version) and for no apparent reason pulling up their petticoats to reveal red underpants, my across-the-aisle neighbor (a man renowned for both his courtesy and his passion for music) abruptly decamped. There was nothing I valued in this piece, except for the fact that the makers had had the opportunity to try something.



Sarah Juli, front, and Claire Porter in the premiere of their **Small Stories** at ADF 6/29/15

Photo: Grant Halverson



Larry Keigwin and Rosie Herrera in the premiere of **Something Wonderful** at ADF

6/29/15 Photo: Grant Halverson

I had to stay, because I had to see what Rosie Herrera and Larry Keigwin had gotten up to together. These two are wacky, brilliant and skillful on their own—what kind of craziness would they make together? *Something Wonderful* has some pretty wonderful moments, and the piece begins with dancing. Larry Keigwin can move! Such a pleasure to see him again. And Rosie Herrera has an unerring instinct for both motion and stillness, and knows just where to slice with her scalpel, dramatically speaking, so that we can see the forces at work on the human heart. There's a bit with a poem and a microphone (a little too long) that makes the analogy (perhaps too clearly) between the art-making process and the love-making endeavor that's so smart and funny that one easily forgives its slight self-indulgence. Bruised, broken, bloodied but unbowed, these artists, tangled up in art, will dance on. In this case, dynamically.