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'Dynamic Duos' is a must-see

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SPECIAL TO THE HERALD-SUN

DURHAM

From the clarion trumpet call that announces the arrival onstage of Mark Haim and Jesse Zaritt to the final image of Rosie Herrera using her wedding dress to beat Larry Keigwin, the American

REVIEW

Dance Festival's "Dynamic Duos" delivered a must-see program on Monday at Reynolds Industries Theater. And, there's still time to see it: the final show takes place today.

In this one-of-a-kind festival offering, choreographers were paired and commissioned by ADF to create and perform these duets. On Monday, these pairings resulted in a dynamic, imaginative and often funny evening of modern dance.

In "Golden Age," Mark Haim and Jesse Zaritt managed to be both a bit over-the-top and intimate in their duet that opened with a smoke-filled scene and epic music suitable for a Hollywood movie set during the Roman Empire. Both wore short, modern dance-style tunics. Zaritt's tunic left his chest bare.

In this duet, Zaritt performed some moves that required great strength and flexibility that included the ability to extend a leg to the stratosphere — or so it seemed. Haim remained a steady presence even hauling eight tires to the front of the stage and then carrying them back to underscore his perseverance — or maybe just to inject a

quirky element into this work.

It's Haim who continually reached out to Zaritt, repeatedly tugging at Zaritt's extended foot. At one point, they kiss.

This work also featured a remarkable storm scene thanks to long-time ADF production manager David Ferri. His use of lighting made it seem like a real storm, sky dark and murky, the sound of rain so realistic I kept looking for water on the stage.

In "Conspicuous Birds," by Chris Yon and Taryn Griggs, their long performance history together showed in the simpatico way in which they made quick, bird-like, half-circle turns in opposite directions while still close together. Their almost constant motion and turnings reflected the ways birds remain on the lookout for signs of danger. Their sparkly jackets accentuated their gestures such as when their hands fluttered under their chins as they performed other grooming motions.

In their funny, moving "Small Stories," Claire Porter and Sara Juli, dressed in long, blue satin gowns, delivered a duet about friendship between two women, who share their everyday experiences and challenges and encourage each other to keep going. As both are running fast, Juli urged the flagging Porter on: "You're doing great. Keep going."

Juli shared her worries about an upcoming interview. "They're going to ask about my vision. I don't have one." Another time, Juli

GO AND DO

WHAT: The American Dance Festival presents "Dynamic Duos."

WHEN: 8 p.m. today.

WHERE: Reynolds Industries Theater, Duke University's West campus.

TICKETS: 919-684-4444 or www.americandancefestival.org

demonstrated, with dramatic hand gestures, how her daughter throws the biggest kisses.

To an aria by Luciano Pavarotti, the women hiked their skirts so their multi-tired, white crinolines covered their faces, and revealed their red underwear.

The dance ended with the women walking side-by-side, backs to the audience, talking to each other and, no doubt, sharing more stories that while small remain a big part of their lives because they have someone to share the stories with.

The title, "Something Wonderful," by Larry Keigwin and Rosie Herrera, may have been meant ironically when it came to their characters living happily ever after. At first, they seemed to be the perfect bride and groom. But soon, it was clear that this relationship had literally unraveled as we notice the hole in his trouser leg and the smears of red (blood?) on his white shirt and her gown. To Johnny Mathis' "What I

Did for Love," they fought. She head-butted him. He grabbed a strand of her long hair and bit it.

In the next scene, as Herrera's on her stomach, face down, Keigwin walked to stage right near the audience and recited William Carlos Williams' famous poem, "This Is Just To Say." In it, the poet confesses to his wife that he has eaten the plums he found in the icebox. "Forgive me/they were delicious/so sweet /and so cold," Williams writes. Thus began the hilarious part of this work as Herrera proceeded to critique Keigwin's delivery, sending him back to try again and again. Then Herrera finally called for help from Claire Porter, who appeared in "Small Stories." Porter told him, "Imagine a plum really juicy, juices dripping down your chest. Stress the s-s-s-es." After he did just that, we heard a loud "pop" and multi-colored confetti erupted to rain over Keigwin in a congratulatory shower.

Kudos to both Keigwin and Herrera — and to all the other choreographers and their ADF world premieres.