

THE NEWS & OBSERVER

ADF review: 'Dynamic Duos' an engaging show for dance fans

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Larry Keigwin performs with Rosie Herrera
in "Something Wonderful."
Larry Keigwin via ADF

The stereotype of modern dance is a performer in deep angst, gesticulating strangely while executing contorted movements. The "Dynamic Duos" program at the American Dance Festival Monday night countered that stereotype, the performers energetically comedic, while purposely spoofing the gesticulations and contortions.

The evening gathered eight dancer-choreographers in four sets of two, performing new pieces they made for themselves. The short works had amusing surfaces with hints of darker elements underneath.

The first half emphasized formal movements within mysterious contexts. Mark Haim and Jesse Zaritt danced "Golden Age" on a haze-filled stage, garbed in flowing tunics. First they connected flamboyantly in classical-painting poses to epic movie soundtracks. Then disco music blared as Zaritt switched to sensual moves, striding the stage in stripper-club mode. Lastly, Zaritt reverently deferred to Haim, who moved slowly through melancholy poses in fading light, signally themes of aging and change.

Chris Yon and Taryn Griggs' "Conspicuous Birds" was an enigmatic journey of shiny-topped creatures, alternating between robotic, mirrored steps and showier, upbeat routines to samplings of soul music. Their blank expressions and repeated movements brought laughter, but their odd gestures began to reveal bird-like motivations of preening, mating and parenting.

The second half was dance theater, incorporating spoken word into audience-friendly staging. For "Small Stories," Claire Porter and Sara Juli, in floor-length evening gowns and layers of crinolines, told little bits of personal histories as they roamed the stage, often while running or sprawled on the floor. Whether detailing anxieties over a job interview or the frustrations of motherhood, the two had delightfully funny characterizations and zany senses of physical comedy.

Rosie Herrera and Larry Keigwin's "Something Wonderful" began with a bride and groom, in torn, bloodstained clothing, angrily confronting each other (was there a wreck or an explosion?). After a disturbing section where the groom used the bride's hair as a towel and toothbrush, the piece shifted into standup comedy as the groom took elocution lessons from the bride, squashed onto the floor by a giant disco ball. The piece ended with the groom's lyrical solo to the title song.

While not a program for the modern dance neophyte, it should engage experienced fans and dance insiders.

