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**'Project 3,' choreographer Edwaard Liang's new work, on stage at ACT**

Former dancer Edwaard Liang and Seattle choreographers Mark Haim and Kent Stowell debut new works with Seattle Dance Project.

By **Michael Upchurch**  
 Seattle Times arts writer

"It needs to be a little more daring," choreographer Edwaard Liang tells his dancers calmly but firmly. "Do what you have to do to push the boundaries for yourself."

What he wants, he says, is perfect fluidity — no pauses, no hesitations — as they ripple their way through an intricate sequence of moves.

Liang's newest piece had no title as of Monday. But it does have pride of place in "Project 3," the Seattle Dance Project's new show at ACT Theatre, opening Friday. In rehearsal, it promises to be Liang's most intricate, dynamic work yet.

Set to excerpts from J.S. Bach's cello suites, it follows half-a-dozen dancers through pretzel-like contacts, partings and reconnections.

It's the second work by Liang that SDP has done, following "Flight of Angels" last year. Seattle audiences will also know him from his memorable "Für Alina" (staged at Pacific Northwest Ballet in 2008) in which two dancers try — hauntingly, futilely — to make contact across a dark stage.

In the new piece, the inspiration is people's conversations — and there's contact right, left and center ... albeit contact that leads to quirky eruptions of solo work.

"Most of the time I think people talk at somebody versus talking to somebody," Liang says. His interest is in "how we communicate with each other — and how we don't communicate."

The sextet is custom-tailored to SDP's seasoned dancers who come, variously, from classical, modern and contemporary dance backgrounds. Liang, about to turn 35, has an impressive dance résumé himself, including tenures with Nederlands Dans Theater, New York City Ballet and Christopher Wheeldon's Morphoses. Demonstrating steps to SDP's dancers, he has a languid yet concise way of moving his tall, willowy frame.

Sad to say, he retired from dancing last fall. While he doesn't rule out performing entirely, he's found his

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Information

**Seattle Dance Project:** [www.seattledanceproject.org](http://www.seattledanceproject.org).

**Edwaard Liang:** [www.edwaardliang.com](http://www.edwaardliang.com).

Dance preview  
 'Project 3'

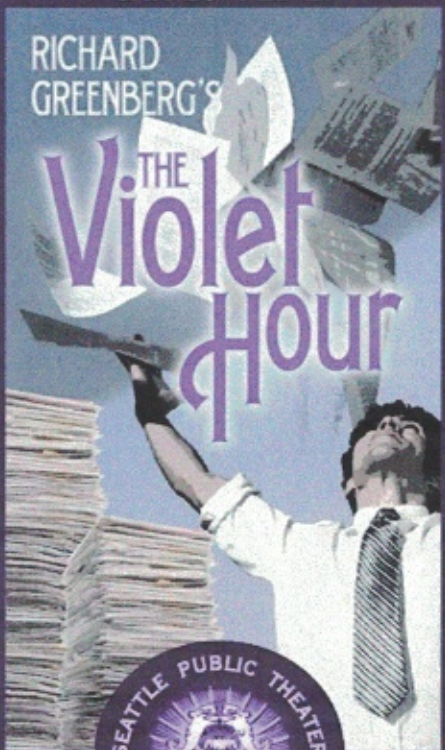
Seattle Dance Project presents new work by Mark Haim, Edwaard Liang and Kent Stowell, 8 p.m. Friday and Saturday, 2 p.m. Sunday, 8 p.m. Feb. 5 and 6, ACT's Falls Theatre, 700 Union St., Seattle; \$25 (206-292-7676 or [www.acttheatre.org](http://www.acttheatre.org)).

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passion as a choreographer. He'll have works debuting this year with the Kirov Ballet, Joffrey Ballet, Singapore Dance Theater, Tulsa Ballet and American Ballet Theatre II, giving him a wide range of dance styles as his canvas.

"More and more," he observes, "dance doesn't really have boundaries. Just like with painters, there're no new colors. No one's reinventing 'red.' It's about how they color — and, hopefully, how they touch someone."

"Project 3" will also debut a duet by former PNB artistic director Kent Stowell and a solo work by Mark Haim ("Goldberg Variations"), the latter to be danced alternately by SDP's Betsy Cooper and Oleg Gorboulev. That Cooper/Gorboulev contrast on the Haim should be interesting. She's a wiry, flexible dynamo; he's more the romantic type, with a longer, leggier sweep.

Cooper's own "In Another Land" and James Canfield's "Because," set to recordings by the Rolling Stones and Beatles, respectively, complete the program.

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