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NYC Guide

Project Runway Can't Fool Us
by Nina Lalli



Tongue 101: Eating La Lingua Loca
by Nina Lalli

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Stepping Out: A Tale for Bodies and Souls
Reggie Wilson/Fist & Heel Performance Group

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Richard Alston Dance Company

A Fledgling Choreographer Takes Off
WilliamsWorks

Maira Shearer, 1926-2006; Rebecca Wright, 1947-2006

All Fall Down: Existing on Red Alert
DanceSpace Project

Tempering Struggle With the Scent of Heaven
The Evidence Dance Company

Road Trip: Mixing the Everyday With the Wacky
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BallettLab at Coil: A Winter Dance Festival

Five Different Takes on One Woman's Work
Deborah Hay Dance Company

Maybe Forever: Love in Light and Shadow
Jennifer Nugent and Paul Matteson

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VOICE in the News

Anya Kamenetz will read from her new book "GENERATION DEBT" on Mon 2/27, 7:00pm, Astor Place Barnes & Noble.

Michael Musto will host a gossip segment on Q Television Network's "On Q Live!" every Wednesday at 9pm

dance

Lines, Lines, Lines

A designing woman tracks life (or a life)

by **Deborah Jowitz**
December 22nd, 2005 12:18 PM

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Jody Oberfelder Dance Projects
Dixon Place at Clark Studio
December 7 through 11

Jody Oberfelder is 52?! Hard to believe, but here she is—a small, robust, radiant athlete—chalking groups of five lines plus two on the stage. The solo isn't about age, but the way she lies on the floor and draws determinedly around her body, struggling and contorting to be both the person drawing and the person being outlined, is a potent metaphor for the issues of image and self-image that arise during a dancer's later years. And as Oberfelder backs along the line she's drawn while entering, we hear in Coleman Hough's taped text, "You see the rest of your life disappearing as you go."

Not to worry about Oberfelder's immediate future. In the same section of her new *LineAge*, she executes slow pirouettes standing on her head, and when she collapses and her dancers rush in to perform CPR and repeat, "Are you okay?" it's clear that she most certainly is.

The title of the piece gives Oberfelder the choreographer lots of wiggle room. That she took advantage of it may be why *LineAge*, despite many striking ingenious passages, doesn't have the force of her marvelous 2002 fairytale piece, *The Story Thus Far*, or the focused clarity of *Tangram*, her 2003 play with geometric shapes. It can't have been easy to attempt to meld concepts of lines (as designs, as timelines, as wrinkles on a face), lineage, and aging and emerge with a meaningful whole. The 10 sections of the piece form a sort of modern dance revue with occasional inserted reprises reminding us that one thing relates to another.

Ropes lying along the floor—pulled, wiggling and looping, by offstage hands—only resemble lifelines if you're primed to think so. And only if you remember that a section is listed as "Outline of a Life (with you)," do you see the formal designs made by Elise Knudson, Rebekah Morin, and Carlton Ward as a progression—except perhaps when they and Oberfelder hold hands to form a chain and the last person keeps worming and crawling and climbing his or her way to first place, or when one dancer travels by walking on the others' shoulders.

The choreography for Oberfelder's strong, agile colleagues builds multiple evolving structures that require acrobatic skills and make few gender distinctions between Ward and the two women. But at some point I get the impression that creating ingenious linear designs with bodies has trumped the more profound aspects of Oberfelder's themes. Knudson and Morin's midair duet in harnesses may relate to intense, spoken lines mentioning flight that I can't quite take in (the variegated selections of music compete with and occasionally obscure Hough's poetry), but it registers primarily as an attractive act, made exciting when Ward enters and swings the women around in the glow of Kathy Kaufmann's lighting.

Because the human element so often surrenders to the skillful patterns, I treasure the moment when Morin, supine on top of Ward, can't easily get out from under Knudson who's lying on top of her, and has to deal with that problem. A film (cinematographer: Ronald K. Gray) introduces the beautiful lined face of 80-year-old dancer-educator Martha Myers, intercutting closeups of her rapt gaze with shots of the dancers in handsomely framed beachscapes, performing some of the same actions they show onstage. The alternation of the two elements vaguely suggests a modern-dance lineage, as does a shot of Oberfelder carrying Myers. I get the point, but I'm hungry for the camera to linger on Myers, whose face tells us much about what it means to be old in years and young in spirit—about seeing the world with wondering eyes.

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