DANCE REVIEW – CLAUDIA MOORE MOONHORSE DANCE THEATRE/ESCAPE ARTIST

Posted on **October 31, 2013** by **pcitron**

Veteran dance artist Claudia Moore is celebrating her 60th birthday with four world premieres by heavyweight choreographers. It is a fitting tribute to a great dancer who has enriched the dance scene of this city for many years.

Three of the four dancesmiths (Susanna Hood, Christopher House and Paul-André Fortier) have taken a similar tack in how to move a 60 year old body through space. They have all used well-defined gestural language to anchor their post-modern movement. While the pieces have these elements in common, they are, of course, very different in sensibility. The order in which they are performed also presents a logic in itself.

Hood's *Beside You* seems to imply that Moore is working against her alter ego, or it could be reaction to a lover, or life itself. She begins by reaching toward something that only she can see, and then proceeds to pass through various personalities who growl, throw shoes, play with a coat and chair, and even conjure up religious imagery like dragging a cross. At the end, she seems to be resigned to her fate, but not before showing defiance. Michel F. Côté's soundscape also passes through mood swings. The piece is intriguing because of its ambiguity.

House's *Archival Feints* is a charmer. Phil Strong has provided a gentle, electronica, chime-like score to underpin movements that seem to reflect every dance Moore has ever performed. Big swooping arms, one-foot balances, tiny little steps, lying on the floor, snaking body movements – the whole piece gives the impression that it is constructed out of past performances. It is a lyrical paean to Moore as a dancer who is forever young.

Fortier's disturbing *Broken Lady* to a heavy industrial score by Victortronic is about facing death. The movements are staccato and harsh, such as windmill arms, crawling on hands and toes, and sudden body crouches. The piece seems to pass through life in flashes, particularly with its repeated movement. In fact, Fortier uses repetition like a bludgeon.

It took Gadfly (a.k.a. Apolonia Velasquez and Ofilio Sinbadinho) to break the post-modern mould. Gadfly is an acclaimed ensemble that performs hip hop/ballet/jazz fusion, but they have come up with something completely surprising. To lovely piano music by John Lang, the very short *Sylph(a)* presents Moore as a delicate fairy-like creature chasing a butterfly, or so it seemed to me. It is a sly and delightful bonbon of innocent joy.

As usual, Roelof Peter Snippe has provided evocative lighting, while Cheryl Lalonde has clothed Moore in appropriate attire – black pants and a red shirt (Hood), red dress and slip (House), black dress (Fortier), and white shift (Gadfly).

To make a seamless evening, Moore has linked the pieces together. She never leaves the stage, using two coatracks to act as costume change stations. This gives us a throughline which is like a continuous journey of a dancer's life in real time. It is very clever staging, but then, Moore is a senior dance artist and we would expect nothing less from her.

Escape Artist

Claudia Moore/Moonhorse Dance Theatre

Dancemakers Centre for Creation

Oct. 25 to Nov. 2