

PREVIEW: S.J. Ewing & Dancers at Dance Place

Preview: S.J. Ewing & Dancers present “Analog”
by Chanel Smith

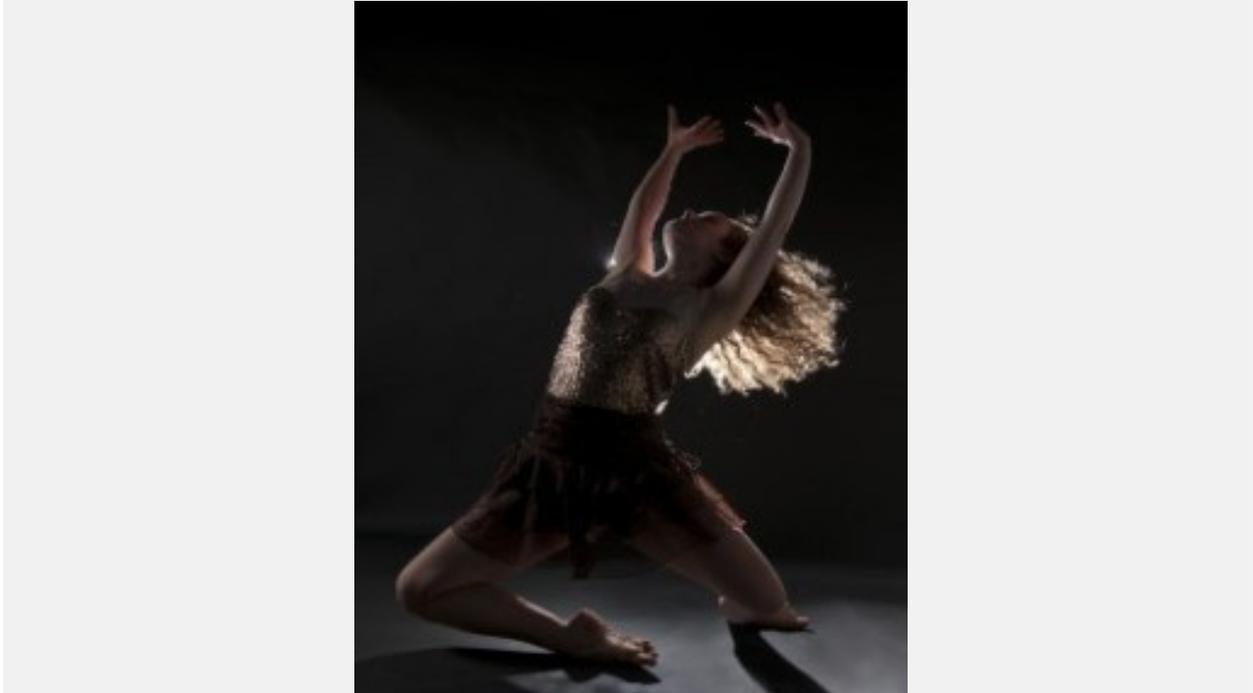


Photo by Maggie Picard

Movement, projections, and music are encapsulated to create their own multifaceted little world and reveal their spatial form. S.J. Ewing & Dancers have come together to present a fascinating blend of choreography and technology for its performance of “Analog” presented at Dance Place this weekend. I had the opportunity to witness part of their rehearsals and catch a glimpse of the inner workings of their choreographic process.

Initially, the idea for this work came from a project Sarah Ewing, choreographer, was tasked to do at her day job which involved creating a database system that could be used by clients, administrators, teachers, students and so forth. Each person, depending on their need of information, could access the database through different portals. Ewing described it as a three-dimensional cube that could be viewed from different vantage points related to the viewers’ needs. Even as I was listening to her describe her idea, Ewing was choreographing her hand gestures to actualize these portals of information she was creating.

As the rehearsal progressed, I witnessed a series of solos and duets that gracefully moved across the stage. The task-based movement created a beautiful flow and seamlessly unique pattern of the physical body. It reflects the idea of taking a three-dimensional form and viewing it from multiple perspectives. The dancers weren’t facing the audience in a single direction, but instead moved in multiple directions of space and played with facing both away and towards the audience.

Then there were the added layers of projections.

Ewing worked in collaboration with Jonathan Hsu, a recent graduate from University of Maryland in dance and kinesiology. Both Ewing and Hsu were in constant dialogue about the balance of movement and projected images. What came to fruition was a fascinating interaction between the dancer and projected image. Lines, grids, shapes and patterns are projected on the dance floor and move alongside the dancers to transport viewers deeper into this choreographed world. While the dancers move through space, they interact with video projections that are projected towards the floor, which covers the stage with full video image.

One of the highlights for me during the rehearsal time was seeing the nuts and bolts of how Ewing and Hsu would map out the movement and projected spatial patterns. Because the movement and projections were being created at different times and different locations, there had to be a systematic process of design. What they did was tape off the dance floor in measured grids that could then be scaled to match the projected image. This allowed Ewing and Hsu to communicate how to synchronize their respective components.

While the movement and projection were a thrill to watch, the most substantial thing that stood out to me overall was Ewing's intention for the audience. As a contemporary choreographer she believes her work should relate to the contemporary issues of the times, and for Ewing, technology can't be ignored. Through these patterns and technological imposed grids and parameters, Ewing desires the audience to find what is human in it. While watching the dancers rehearse, I began to connect this idea to my daily relationship with technology and asked myself what is human within the constructed technological world we live in? These questions are worth pondering during the full performance of Analog.

Check out this spellbinding performance August 13th and 14th at Dance Place and be transported into a different world of movement and technology.
Performance Information:

Saturday, August 13th at 8pm

Sunday, August 14th at 7pm

Dance Place

3225 8th St NE

Washington, DC 20017

Tickets \$15-25 online, \$30 at the door

<https://www.danceplace.org/performances/s-j-ewing-dancers-2/>