

REVIEW: “A Tasting Menu” by Errant Movement at Takoma Ranch

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by Christina Lindenmuth

Sitting in the basement of Maureen Andary’s home, a.k.a. Takoma Ranch, on Saturday, September 24th, I am filled with curiosity and ambivalence as I wait for Errant Movement dance company to take the stage. The crowd is filled with a diverse range of people, younger and older, fellow dancers and non-dancers, mumbling in excitement. Tonight’s show is being presented as a tasting menu: bite sized portions of pieces from Errant Movement’s first year in existence.

The first course on the menu features older pieces, including the silly and relatable “(Dis)connected,” where we see two girls struggling to balance an intimate friendship with their constant texting. The pair starts on stage standing across from each other, mime-texting. We quickly learn that these two have a bone to pick with one another, as they swat at each other and move sporadically. They create robotic, geometric shapes to music that features technological sound effects. There are a few moments where they slow down and pay friendly attention to each other, with reaching and leaning and smiling. It’s as if for a moment they remember all the reasons why they were even friends to begin with. Then the piece ends where it began – with both girls absentmindedly texting away.

For the second course we see more recent pieces in their repertoire, and a more developed sense of identity in the choreography. In pieces like “It’s Complicated” and “Connectivity/Complexity,” we see a clever usage of dancers as scenery, either standing in frozen, unresponsive poses while a soloist dances through them, or as pedestrians walking across the stage to contrast the soloist’s struggle in solitude.

Course three, the longest act, features snippets of seven new pieces that are still in the works for a future production. Here we experience a range of uplifting and painful emotions. Pieces like “Power” and “If” give the onlookers a sense of strength and confidence, while pieces like “Drift” and “Interference” paint a darker picture of sorrow and suffering. Perhaps my favorite piece of the night comes second-to-last, called “Blackbird.” We see a soloist with her back facing the audience, and a band trapping her arms behind her. The song is a soulful acapella, repeating the lyrics “you ain’t never gonna fly.” The dancer writhes and bends, trying to break free, while demonstrating beautiful control and composure. We almost never see her from the front, as if she is too prideful to face us as she struggles. At one point the band restricting her arms comes off, yet she is still unable to stretch out her limbs and be free.

At the end of the show, Choreographer and Artistic Director Rachel Turner opens the floor for questions. It’s plain to see that the audience was intrigued, moved, and captivated by the dancers’ “fluid power,” as one viewer called it. I was most impressed by Turner’s ability to use such an intimate space to produce such a large impact. The overall subject matter of adversities and relationships had a profound effect on me. I wasn’t once distracted by bad technique, awkward closeness or heavy breathing, and the dancers projected their emotions realistically and tenderly. I totally forgot I was watching a dance performance in someone’s basement!

What stood out to me the most was the support and sincerity of the audience members. This was especially made clear during the intermission when names were drawn for a choice of three prizes. Laid out for the winner to choose from were a bottle of wine, a Starbucks gift card and an Errant

Movement ladies tank top. The first name was called, and a man named Ritchie came up, went straight for the ladies tank top, and even put it on! Among Ritchie were several other supporters who had nothing but great things to say. The encouragement and excitement were very contagious. Tonight's three-course menu gave us just a taste of the poetry and the poise of Errant Movement, leaving us all hungry for more.