

## REVIEW: “Two Of Us” at Dance Loft on 14

*Two Of Us* Review  
by Rachael Appold

Errant Movement hosted a series of duets born from nostalgia at Dance Loft on 14 on Saturday, February 18th. This showcase, appropriately titled *Two Of Us*, presented the audience with a concoction of technical skill, creative movement, and storylines held the audience's attention all night. Rachel Turner, artistic director of Errant Movement, was inspired to produce this concert by her own childhood memories in Chicago of attending a duet series entitled *Duets For My Valentine*. Like the performances from Turner's childhood, *Two Of Us* will be presented annually.

The opening piece, *(Dis)connected*, choreographed by Rachel Turner and performed by Errant Movement, was immediately well-received. The audience giggled as two female dancers dressed in all black entered the stage while texting on imaginary cell phones. The laughter grew as a Microsoft Windows startup sound effect broke through the dancers' self absorbed act of texting and forced them to recognize each other's presence on the stage. The piece was littered with more old school references as well as computer-esque sound effects, and it featured chopping movements, both technical and organic, precisely executed by the dancers. This piece may allude to society's unwillingness to communicate without technology.

One piece which left audience members noticeably engrossed was *Salty Shoulder*, choreographed by Da'Shawn Rawl and performed by Maya Fedorenko and Cordelia Roberts of RawArts Dance Company. Throughout this piece, Fedorenko and Roberts visited and revisited a convulsing movement. The piece ended with a dramatic and unexpected halt as Roberts seemingly traded her concerned expression for one of apathy and victory.

To say that *Salty Shoulder* was unlike anything I had seen before would not do this piece justice. The combination of altered contemporary dance technique and spasmodic organic movement provided a unique and refreshing take on the contemporary pieces to which audiences are accustomed. However, the aspect of this piece which truly captivated the audience, was the concerning and mind-boggling storyline. Both dancers executed sporadic movement, but Roberts' character always appeared to be more in control than that of Fedorenko. Perhaps this implies that both characters are participating in a dangerous activity, though one can handle it and the other can not. Roberts' initial concern for her partner, followed by a victorious expression at the piece's end suggests that she intended for Fedorenko character to get hurt. Such a storyline, if accurate, is a shocking concept.

*Cocoon*, performed by fusiondance, added a death-defying essence to the evening. The dancers in this duet, Shelley Siler and Laura Giles, performed an acro-dance concoction which involved unexpected falls and smooth transitions from impressive lifts. After one particularly awe-inspiring lift, the audience clapped as the lifted dancer was safely returned to the ground. Such nerve-wracking stunts were reminiscent of the late Pina Bausch, leaving us invested in the dancers' safe landings. FusionDance's striking piece was mirrored in intensity and audience engagement by the first piece after the intermission, *Sedentary*. It was choreographed by Iyun Ashani Brenner-Harrison and performed by Brenner-Harrison and Tarik O'Meally of Ashani Dances. Like *Salty Shoulder*, this duet included a beginning motif: Brenner Harrison and O'Meally would walk upstage hand-in-hand before one pushed the other away.

The two male dancers maintained a constant struggle; both characters appeared to care deeply for each other, but one dancer always pushed the other away. It was clear that one character was proud

of his relationship while the other was ashamed, perhaps due to societal scrutiny against the LGBT+ community.

It goes without saying that this piece is an important one for the LGBT+ community, as well as for the entire world. Brenner-Harrison's choreography alludes to the heartbreaking consequences of discrimination against and lack of protections for LGBT folks. Not to mention the movement quality exhibited by both dancers was impossibly fluid. Once the piece ended, audience members let out emotional sighs and talked amongst themselves. Some wiped away tears. This reaction indicated that Brenner-Harrison and O'Meally had accomplished their goal of providing an emotional and accurate depiction of one of many LGBT+ struggles.

Another notable piece was *Kites*, performed by The SAPAN Institute, which could be described as a "double duet." Two actors stood onstage, narrating a story of a relationship torn apart by distance and different life goals, while two dancers portrayed the kites that the actors reminisced about flying. Not only was this concept original and comical, its delivery was direct and creative, making for a highly successful and well-received piece.

Also memorable was *Unshakeable* performed by DanceArtTheater. This remarkable duet was executed with the goal of presenting an important realization: each person that surrounds us has their own life, struggles, and goals. As Melissa Snow executed a series of technical movements in a raveling and unraveling fashion, Alex Miegel (presumably playing a stranger) watches her story and lifts her in an attempt to provide understanding and assistance. The skillful technique of the two dancers, combined with the graceful storytelling is one of the many aspects that left me emotionally invested in these characters' lives.

*Two Of Us* proved to be successful by debuting with a gripping and inspiring showcase. Other performances of the evening include duets from DancEthos, who brought an elegant use of a bench prop to the stage, Direct Effect Dance and Fitness, who presented a comical hip hop duet in a "country" setting, Hannah + Lucia, Nomadic Artist, Kista Tucker Insights, Shay Turner and Oralee Skeath, and Sylvana Christopher and John Lee.

This series presented a diverse mix of companies and genres, with many pieces intermingling art forms. Such variety in a showcase is to be expected from Errant Movement, a company which strives to bring unexpected and unique dance to the stage. After being founded by Rachel Turner in August 2015, the company has already made a name for itself, and hosting *Two Of Us* serves to drive Errant Movement's mission forward. This showcase plans to repeat as an annual event, and if this debut was any indication, years to come will provide further opportunity for art lovers to have their eyes opened to a versatile mix of up-and-coming companies.