



"Duality" by Feledi Project

KATHEE MILLER

HH11 DANCE FESTIVAL

Now in its fourth season, the HH11 Festival gained accolades this past weekend for holding firm to its founding vision of inclusivity, seasoned and emerging artists alike intersecting across a fiercely diverse program that ran the gamut from physical theater to Indian classical dance. Over the course of four evenings, regional and international choreographers and dancers joined forces with area talent to flesh out narratives about the human experience, from Feledi Project's hauntingly beautiful study of connection and intimacy in "Duality" to The Dance Network's foot-stomping (and tap-dancing) love letter to Americana in the deliciously entertaining "Hold Me Down."

Dance-film dream team Robin Bisio and Nik Blaskovich returned for a debut of their latest plein air short, *What Green Altar*, a luscious ode to Santa Barbara's treasured landscape developed on the majestic grounds of Lotusland, while Lauren Chertudi's satisfyingly silent "My arm a floating structure" illustrated the grace of moving through life with mindful presence.

In characteristic tradition, the festival also hosted a community presentation of the Apogee Awards, honoring a selection of esteemed Santa Barbara dance educators who have contributed to the city's enduring dance-scape. This year's recipients included Maria Rendina-Frantz, Alana Tillim, Tracy Kofford, Derrick Curtis, and lifetime achievement honoree Susan Alexander.

Director Devyn Duex has consistently curated her festival through a fixed belief that art's wildly varying approaches can make for fascinating programming, challenging audiences to wade through distinctive themes that might occasionally defy their sensibilities. And therein lies the point: Just as art can wield impressive inspiration over the observer, so too does it reserve the right

RE|dance group



COURTESY

to disappoint. Were I to describe the festival's only discernible shortcoming (through no fault of its own), it would come in the form of a lackluster audience. The UCSB Dance Company debuted a brilliantly executed piece by trailblazing choreographer Monica Bill Barnes titled "Since We All Showed Up," and only about 70 people actually did; Nicole Powell and Miche Wong sliced expertly through Steven Kelly's luscious "Look to the Sky" and Tonia Shimin's mesmerizing "Of Time and the Spirit" with stirring confidence among a sea of empty seats.

On Monday morning, I found myself reflecting over the young male dancers who had hinged and flexed throughout the weekend with stark vulnerability and unambiguous emotion — Project21Dance's Ronaldo Bowins was a blazing standout — at a time when our country is experiencing the devastating effects of young men who aren't afforded a similar outlet. I thought of dancers such as Katrine Dailey, whose trembling strength lit up an unadorned stage in Peri Trono's aching duet "for those," and the feminine mystique of SBCC Dance Company's beguiling "Inside Myself." Night after night, they, along with more than 50 noteworthy companies, choreographers, and dancers, came out in full force to offer kinetic tales of loss and determination, stories of humor and perseverance for a re-emerging community. I'm sorry you missed it. —Ninette Paloma

Presented by
Nebula Dance Lab.
At Center Stage
Theater, Thu.-Sun.,
Mar. 1-4.