

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 27, 2010

"Deviations", written and directed by Joe Goode

University of California, Berkeley
 Presented by The Department of Theater, Dance and Performance Studies
 Durham Studio Theater
 November 21, 2010

I am both suspect and perhaps overly critical of interdisciplinary performance. But even a skeptic and cynic like me knows that every once in a while, this genre gets it right - well-researched pieces with formal and narrative cohesiveness, favoring collaboration and cooperation above randomness and mismatching. When the necessary time and energy is spent on the integration of elements, interdisciplinary work can be significant and telling. It is not enough to just throw things together (and so many of today's choreographers do that), relativity must be the primary goal in order to achieve any level of artistic depth.

Joe Goode's recent work, "Deviations", presented by the Department of Theater, Dance and Performance Studies at UC Berkeley, demonstrates the complexity of concept through text, scenework, and movement - taking it from a static one-dimensional notion and placing it on an active spectrum, where it can range from problematic to hopeful. To me, the word 'deviation' has a negative connotation; it implies that something has gone awry. And, desired outcomes are permanently, and perhaps forever, compromised. However, there can be an upside to deviation as well. This one-act theatrical musing introduces seven characters, all on their own individual journeys of deviation, which for some provides positive changes in their lives, while for others leads to lack of focus, sorrow and heartache.

The seven personalities are framed by Annabelle, a storyteller and writer who narrates the action to some degree. In doing so, "Deviations" raises issues of real time - are these actual events or the results of Annabelle's imagination? In this theatrical equation, not only is the idea of deviation appropriately fuzzy, but reality also becomes an undefined integer. In ninety minutes, we learn that these characters (real or imaginary), Annabelle included, are experiencing upsides and downsides from their personal deviations - deviating from their chosen course of action; deviating from their relationships; deviating from assumptions; deviating from their roles.

Accompanying movement unfolded alongside the text and dialogue, satirically, comically and organically. Goode designed the choreography to emphasize and highlight what was happening in the acting scenes, as opposed to the movement propelling the story forward on its own. This may have been one of the reasons why the piece made so much sense. The movement was truly embedded and entrenched in the dramatic action: reaching limbs supplemented scenes where the characters were searching; trying to capture and find something or someone. One pas de deux mirrored a tumultuous, though naturalistic relationship - moments of tenderness and the desire for companionship juxtaposed against wanting to escape and the need for solitude. Still other dance segments cleverly spoke to some of the more farcical subject matter, including an incantation that explained metaphysics and a game show presentation of the perfect man. This was interdisciplinary practice at its best.

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- ▶ 2017 (18)
- ▶ 2016 (48)
- ▶ 2015 (52)
- ▶ 2014 (50)
- ▶ 2013 (49)
- ▶ 2012 (40)
- ▶ 2011 (48)
- ▼ 2010 (45)
 - ▶ December (4)
 - ▼ November (3)
 - "Deviations", written and directed by Joe Goode
 - Works in the Works 2010
 - "ODD" - Axis Dance Company and inkBoat
- ▶ October (4)
- ▶ September (4)
- ▶ August (4)
- ▶ July (3)
- ▶ June (5)
- ▶ May (1)
- ▶ April (6)
- ▶ March (5)
- ▶ February (5)
- ▶ January (1)
- ▶ 2009 (20)
- ▶ 2008 (10)
- ▶ 2007 (10)
- ▶ 2006 (6)

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Photo by Austin Forbord

I will say that "Deviations" was a little light on the movement – the work was more play and less dance theater than I have come to expect from Joe Goode. And, because the movement was so brilliantly integrated and an imperative addition to the action, it would have been great to see a little more of it.

Posted by Heather Desaulniers at **3:43 PM**

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