



# Daniel Lewis Miami Dance Sampler: A Recap

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In celebration of National Dance Week, the Florida Dance Association and Dance Now! Miami presented the Daniel Lewis Dance Sampler on April 27, 2012 at the Little Haiti Cultural Center. The eponymously named event is a revival of the Modern Dance Sampler, founded and run for many years by former New World dance dean Daniel Lewis. The ongoing mission of the event is to feature and celebrate the diversity of local companies and individual choreographers that make their work in South Florida. Lewis, a former Jose Limón dancer and choreographer in his own right, developed the dance program at New World School of the Arts and through his company Miami Dance Futures produced, among others, the Miami Balanchine Conference, the Dance History Scholar's Conference, the aforementioned Modern Dance Sampler, and various dance companies such as Houlihan and Dancers. It was very fitting to see a former Houlihan dancer, Bill Doolin, director of the Florida Dance Association, along with co-directors Hannah Baumgarten and Diego Salterini of Dance Now! Miami, present to Lewis an honorary award in recognition of his dedication and success in nurturing and promoting dance in Miami.

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most difficult partnering look seamless and effortless. Albert and Marin's physicality was ever present in both the most intimate and moody moments to the most jubilant.

Pioneer Winter's *Mother-Son(days)* was a profound piece performed by Winter and Ana Bolt as the mother-son pair. The duet was accompanied by the live narration of Winter's mother's diary from when she was 17 years old, ruminating on her future about love, family, and death — and from Winter's own diary as a 10 year old facing the death of his mother. The diary entries are almost 20 years apart and illustrated the similarities in the mother's and son's emotional and sometimes prophetic tenor. To use Winter's own words, "separated by time... [the entries] reflect similar personalities, fears, and even [the] same humor."



Photo: "Keystone" (choreography by Carolyn Dorfman), with dancers Jacqueline Dumas Albert and Louie Marin; by Whitney Browne

In less capable hands this could have easily been a maudlin and overly sentimental piece. But Winter's true genius is that he created a movement landscape that, although as abstract as the dialogue was literal, existed alongside the narration within the same tone poem. The dancing rested like a subconscious layer over the words without any literal translation yet still provoked the sense of love, loss, and humor without any sentimental manipulation. His work evidences a profound maturity in such a young creator whose talent was well matched by the incomparable stage presence, subtlety and intensity, of Bolt. Both dancers mirrored and informed each other in their separate landscapes only to join at the very end to the echoed sentiment of how Winter and his mother both really didn't like Sundays.

The Brigid Baker WholeProject performed *Wonderlawn* excerpted from *Comet Lovejoy Survives* and choreographed by Baker. Baker is known for her "hand made environments" and the piece opens with a dim lit

stage offset by a garden of glittery and illuminated trash including lights, shiny garlands, and gold paper strewn about the stage that has transformed the space into something otherworldly. The dancers, in black evening wear and dresses, walk through this landscape while one of the men throws paper airplanes as he walks the circumference of the stage. Ultimately the company dons sanitary gloves and collects the garbage and heaps it into a corner. Once the stage is cleared the pedestrian act of sweeping the stage follows. The second movement with the full company is lush and gestural, with large sweeping unison movement. The dancers seemed released from some confinement just as the stage had been cleared of its debris and they moved as dark whispers in the wind. On their own, both the hand-made environment prelude and the subsequent dance were interesting and captivating. The only detraction is the two put together felt like they belonged to two different pieces, or needed a more unifying transitional component.

Arts Ballet Theater danced a lively ensemble, *A Celebration to Klimt* that lifted the Handel selection off the floor with a swash of bright colors and strong diagonals in this pleasant interpretation by Vladimir Issaev of Gustav Klimt's art nouveau symbolist paintings. Another ballet offering was the modern balletic duet *Liminally Venn* choreographed by Lara Murphy with an articulate, tense, quick, and staccato vocabulary impressively danced by the duet.

Brazarte Dance Company's *Corpo* was a piece more driven by the music than the movement vocabulary. The strong rhythmic music dictated the transitions in the piece, whereas the movement, at times overly pedestrian and posturing, felt flat despite the energy of its accompaniment. The ensemble at times was blatantly not together in the unison sections and the appearances at the beginning and the end of the piece by the one male dancer lacked reason or device for his entrances and exits. Luis Alberto Cuevas' *It Gets To A Point*, similarly relied on music changes for its choreographic transitions. The recorded accompaniment of classical strings playing pop selections from the Isley Brothers and No Doubt was jarring

and the piece deserved to live free of these selections. However, as a group ensemble this was a stronger piece and there is some build to the final moment of one single dancer moving frenetically as the lights fade. In terms of vocabulary, this final moment was the most interesting and arresting and just as the piece actually found its legs, it had ended.

Afua Hall's *Sitting Stand* starts with Quilvio Rodriguez wearing nothing but dance briefs with his back to the stage. The striking and vulnerable moment fades too quickly without further exploration as partner Ronderrick Mitchell dresses Rodriguez in matching Bermuda shorts and unbuttoned shirt. What follows are different partnering sections that although sometimes interesting, together seem disjointed and awkward and never fulfill the promise of such a strong and provocative beginning. Karen Peterson and Dancers *Potpourria*, a 2012 excerpt, is another duet that had visually interesting moments in a "mixed-ability" partnering duet but did not create any distinguishable emotional tenor or overt definition of the space. The bookend pieces of the concert were offerings by Dance Now! Miami. Megan Holsinger and Quilvio Rodriguez partnered in *Mitosis*, the opening duet piece by Salterini. Costumed in shiny body suits and lit in purple hues, the dancers moved and appeared like pieces of silk in a stream of water through a series of lifts before coming to a full and breath catching stop, alone, on opposite sides of the stage. The closing piece by Baumgarten, *Visions of Unrest*, is excerpted from a larger work and presents the final three of five movements. The piece progresses from Dariel Milan's solo where he moves like flesh turned liquid in his fluid but frenetic rendering of *IN-somnia* to the duet in the fourth act, *Dreams*, and finally the group finale in *Awakening*. The piece is rich in Baumgarten's quirky original motifs such as the opening head toggle and sauté. Baumgarten builds layer upon layer both in the emotional tones of her piece and in the carving of space through progressive variations, canons and inversions as dancers weave in between each other and join together in satisfying unison.