



BWW Reviews: Endangered Species, WORKING WOMEN at the Joyce

February 8, 2013, by [Amber Adams](#)

WORKING shared a weekend at the Joyce Theater alongside the Sean Curran Dance Company this January 30th-February 3rd. The program series, led by Ken Maldonado of the Gotham Arts Exchange, consisted of eight female choreographers in New York City: Monica Bill Barnes, Sidra Bell, Janis Brenner, Camille A. Brown, Jane Comfort, Carolyn Dorfman, Loni Landon, and Kate Weare.

Most of the program shared the common thread of spatial caging by various set pieces or pools of light which limited the space danced on stage. The weighted and restricted dancing was a reflection on the little room female choreographers possess in our progressive society.

A spirit of satire emerged as Monica Bill Barnes opened the performance with *Luster*, a female duet danced to Tina Turner's "Proud Mary." The dance began with a stop motion film of the two dancers laboriously walking their flashy set piece from a storage location on the Hudson River to The Joyce Theater. The film projection then became reality, revealing both the on and off stage work involved in a dance production.

As the live dancers walked on stage, setting the miniature red curtain piece in place and plugging in the lights, *Luster* was danced frontal and stationary. The women burst out a high-energy routine in New Balance running shoes and sequined dresses, while over the top facial expressions allowed the audience to humorously participate in the internal monologue of a show woman. Jane Comfort and Company presented a work in progress. Entitled *Untitled* the dance was misplaced in a series of more complete choreographies. The lack of vision in the choreographer's choices could explain the use of mini flashlights. One male dancer started out in darkness with one flashlight in his mouth. He intriguingly slugged across the stage as a reaction of his articulating spine. As the eighties music faded to electric ambient sound, an array of dancers covered a lot of space running on and off stage and experimenting with partnering that seemed random.

Ms. Comfort's interesting experiment led to Janis Brenner's *Contents May Have Shifted*, originally set in 2002. The experimental influence of Alwin Nikolias was painted on Holly Farmer, a previous Merce Cunningham soloist. The confined staging of two parallel blue lighting trails on stage appeared as an airplane runway and made room for expansive and concise choreography. The emphasis on the process of this piece, coupled with Brenner's personal travel journeys, aided the functionality of the dance.

Rebuilding Sandcastles had a sweet world premiere. As the youngest female choreographer on the program, Loni Landon's work proved one of the strongest. Both rich and heavy in its emotive and physical efforts, the innovative shapes and strong technique of the dancers exemplified a new technique that dancers have today. So much so that the floor work required the dancers to wear kneepads and socks.

Keystone, choreographed by Carolyn Dorfman, offered the true value of a duet and what it means to dance literally together. With plenty of bodily contact and partnering, Jacqueline Dumas Albert and Louie Marin danced with athletic tenderness. Fully completing every movement idea, *Keystone* led the audience on a journey of what happens when outside forces intrude on the developing relationship.

Kate Weare remained true to her choreographic voice in her dance *The Light has Not the Arms to Carry Us*.

Presenting a work complete with a third section, Weare spliced the textures of the rectangular light pools while heavy and percussive feet opposed the light.

Sidra Bell's work *Beyond the Edge of the Frame* was danced by L.A. based dance company BODYTRAFFIC. This work suggested an idea of the egocentric and mechanical tone of fame. Sucked of spirit, the dancing was technically proficient and appeared to be doing what seemed "cool" and industrial. Overall, the piece was actively mediocre.

Camille A. Brown's work *The Real Cool* was perhaps the most evident of social and political awareness. She uprooted some very real issues in African American history by expanding its relevance in today's society. Ms. Brown danced an incredibly guttural and characterized solo dressed subtly like a Minstrel performer in a single pool of light. The goose bumps of dehumanization blatant in African American history were as haunting as the two shadows of Ms. Brown against the black scrim.

The dichotomy of *Luster* sewed the thread of the evening together in a light-hearted and energetic conclusion. These eight female choreographers in the United States continue to express the fight for survival. Although program notes indicated grants and funding for these eight works, U.S. funding is difficult to maintain for female choreographers.

WORKING WOMEN released some of the strongest artistic voices of the hardest working women choreographers in the dance community and in the nation. These endangered species can scream at the top of their lungs, bang loudly on the Glass Ceiling, and still struggle to be heard.