

DANCEVIEW

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they take to measuring their own and each others' flesh. They engage in tentative touches and stretches but they also cannibalistically try to devour parts of their own and their partner's physique. In the opening section an upstage facing unison has a gap. A body gets dumped, eventually rises and steps into place. The dancers sway gently—order is established. But then there is also Chinchin Hsu, the only one in a pretty frock, whose galloping runs recall a colt that has been set free.

But *Girl* is also about family. Longtime partner Nol Simonse—he long limbed—and Funsch—a good head shorter—do what people do on a first date. They question each other about their families. Later, the two of them return shriveled, aged and bent over. They move in perfect sync until Simonse stiffly steps out, and she labors on alone. He looks like an upright corpse. And still later, they both enter into the company patterns.

With two men dancers Funsch opened *Girl's* perspective to the male of the species. Chad Dawson, contorted and conflicted was perhaps unsure of his identity while Nick Brentley looked lost among all those females. I am not sure, however, how and why their presence connected to the rest of *Girl*.

The Taiko drummers from the Grrrl Brigade—long hair, shortest of skirts—made their statements as strong,

fierce and joyous images of modern women. It was curiously appropriate to see how in a piece which explores gestures, these young women used their own hands and arms to such strong effect.

'Have We Come A Long Way, Baby?' (Sept. 27, 2014, Joe Goode Annex, San Francisco) was the fourth of **Hope Mohr Dance's** "The Bridge Project" in which Mohr, a former dancer with the Trisha Brown Dance Company, is inviting excellent, but locally little known choreographers to share the stage with her own company. In 2012 it was Dusan Tynek Dance Theatre; in 2013 Susan Rehorst. These were intelligent and excellent evenings of dance. The Bay Area owes her.

With this year's "Bridge" Hope paid tribute to the West Coast influence on Post-Modernism both past and current. The iconic Anna Halprin and her pupil Simone Forte were followed by Hope's excellent reconstruction of Lucinda Child's *Carnation* and the world premiere of her complex yet lucid *s(oft is)hard*, danced brilliantly by Peiling Kao.

Halprin, at 94, showed us how the tiniest of gestures—the beckoning finger, a shift of weight—can communicate clearly and powerfully. Dressed in a full-length gold coat and a Venetian carnival mask for her 1996 *The Courtesan and the Crone*, she offered a strip tease to Corelli that was



Hope Mohr Dance Company: Anna Halprin, Photo: Margo Moritz.

hilarious, touching and heartbreaking.

Forte did one of her splendid movement and spoken word improvisations, *News Animation*, without the stack of newspapers, I saw her in last time she was in San Francisco. All she had was a scarf, a towel and her journal. Talking softly and padding gently on slightly bent knees, she rolled on the floor and rushed about as she spun a whole universe out of tiny gestures and meandering wonderings. Starting with the contemplation of a drop of water from a faucet, she ended this improvisation by the giving us a perspective on the Milky Way. Remarkable in Forte's performance was that, having been performing for over fifty years, she still projected a childlike sense of discovery about where ideas can take us, if we only let them.

Child's *Carnation* (1964), last seen here more than a decade ago, has become a classic from the Judson era. Mohr's performance showed us why. The use of those foam curlers with which she crowned herself on that lettuce dryer, do not have the same resonance as they probably had in a pre-feminist era. But the lack of inflection, the emphasis on neutrality and the sense of having to finish what we now call "tasks" infused Mohr's performance with a quiet desperation, absurdity and nobility.

Mohr's own brilliantly conceived and excellently realized *s(soft is)hard* is grounded in the inevitability of time passing. Ben Juodvalkis' click sound track complemented a recitation of dates inspired by Mohr's journal writing. In these non-chronological sequences from the 1940's to the future, time bunched up, curled in on itself and stretched from before Mohr's birth to beyond the present. The choreography is intense, full of unexpected trajectories, increasing in complexity with phrases both telling and abstruse. It started with a young Kao looking at herself; it ended with her on her back and the sound of bells tolling.

Chitresh Das's 2009 collaboration, *India Jazz Suite* with tap dancer Jason Samuels Smith became such a popular success that Das' reaching out to another rhythmic dance practice was no surprise. Yet, while the world premiere of *Yatra* (September 27, 2014, Palace of Fine Arts, San Francisco), a collaboration between Das and Flamenco virtuoso Antonio Hidalgo Paz, offered similarly

respectful approaches to divergence and confluence, *Yatra* was theatrically more cohesive.

The show featured Alka Raghram's handsome multi-media component—though its verbal poetry limped. Hinting at but, gratefully, not pushing the idea of Flamenco as having originated in Northern India, it emphasized journeys that cross and break down borders. Lovely images of floating candles during India's Festival of Lights opened and closed the show.

Yet watching Paz and Das side by side, you couldn't miss the suggestion of a common heritage. The verticality, liquid arms and expressive hands, fulminating footwork, the alternation between pure and story-telling sections and the freely flowing give and take between music and dance spoke to a relationship.

Light on their feet and liquid in their upper bodies, a quintet of women honored the mother goddess Kali. With its charming patterns of circles and spirals the dance might have originated in communal practices yet here it was elevated to classical form by Charlotte Moraga's sense of perfection in the details and her extraordinary speed and precision in those pirouettes.

After spotlights on Das and Paz put in relief their respective way of using arms and feet, Paz stepped into an extended Farruca, Flamenco's quintessential male solo. With his chest out, thrusting shoulders and nimbly changing directions, he held back and rushed forward as he slowly built toward percussive footwork so fast that his shimmering feet no longer seemed to touch the ground.

In his multi-part solo, Das reminded us of just why he can entrance audiences, not because of his still astounding technique—he will be seventy in November—but because of his generosity as a performer. Starting with one of those playful encounters between a love-stricken gopi and young Krishna, Das then proceeded to dance abstract principles like "power" and "peace." He followed that with a short Kathak Yoga, a practice he developed in which he simultaneously performs three different rhythmic patterns for the feet, the tabla and the voice.

Not least of this concert's pleasure was the delicious competition between the musicians, the tabla and the cajon; the guitar and the sitar; and the two vocalists. When they finally got together, joined by these two eminent dancers, a joyful noise was made by all.