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A Look Back and a Leap Forward: Invertigo Rings in 10 Years of Dance

by Lara J. Altunian

On October 22nd Invertigo Dance Theatre celebrated a decade of contemporary performances, educational programs, and magical realism in Santa Monica's Moss Theatre. The event guided the audience through three different facets of their organization, with highlights being excerpts from Interior Design, their first ever production, and Formulae and Fairy Tales, which they plan on developing during their upcoming season and which promises to be a fascinating piece on Alan Turing, father of computer science. Both showed off the company's current talent while showcasing founder and artistic director Laura Karlin's creativity and innovation.

Interior Design



Photo by Joe Lambie.

A full half hour of Invertigo's debut work, Interior Design, followed the DTP presentation. First commissioned by the Mexican government and created in Tijuana, the universal plot features a

mixed-race couple navigating nosy neighbors while dealing with a miscarriage. Although from 2007, the piece is perhaps more relevant now than ever thanks to the country's state of division featuring race and gender politics.

Every action is raw and the chemistry between dancers Hyosun Choi and Jonathan Bryant carried this dance/play through melancholy moments, comic relief, and acts of tenderness and care. Like many of the company's productions, the work made heavy use of props (sometimes unfortunately blocking the view for those seated in the bottom front row seats) and dialogue as a way to enhance movement. The dance duo showed off their dynamic partnership by swinging their bodies over and around a wooden table when "arguing" about how to arrange a small pot of flowers. Each elongation of their limbs and synchronized stance enhanced their playfulness, as did a later scene when they suddenly appear wearing boxes on their feet—a move which at first shows their clumsy attachment to their belongings but ended with the two performing a charming couples' contemporary dance full of dips and swoons.

Audience participation is a common Invertigo thread that was showcased in the piece. Choi reeled viewers in by addressing them as her neighbors, and searched for someone to read instructions out loud on stage. She and Bryant lifted each other into different poses assembling furniture shapes, later matching a voice recording's directions for a "healthy relationship." Their communication with their "neighbors" evolved when a recording "rings" their doorbell and asked them a rapid-fire onslaught of questions that ended with intimate inquiries about their plans to have children. The quick change in tone as seen on Choi's face as she withdrew is like PTSD, representative of the roller coaster of emotions miscarriage brings. Her following desperate cries were heartbreaking and difficult to endure. The crowd at Moss seemingly agreed as several sniffles were heard throughout the theater.

Celebrating the Past & Looking Forward

Invertigo's emotional pieces have carried the company through a decade of performances, rooted in their sense of community. You won't find a simplistic performance from Invertigo, which often flirts with every facet possible for telling a story; their choice of symbols and imagery has evolved to be more complex over time, but the emphatic factor behind their work remains strong and fascinating to watch.