

# REVIEW: Motion X Dance DC at the Kennedy Center Millennium Stage

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REVIEW by Mariana Barros

As I entered through the front doors of the Kennedy Center's main lobby and walked through that immaculate grand hall while catching glimpses of the sunset softly approaching the waterfront on the other side of the back glass doors, I could not believe that this was my first time coming to see a show at the Millennium Stage. As a native of the DC area, I am ashamed to admit that. First of all, a free show. Second of all, as I gladly discovered, the Kennedy Center has happy hour prices up until their nightly shows at 6 PM. Both would normally be the key ingredients in the making of a wonderful evening. However, this past Wednesday November 2nd, the works presented by Motion X Dance DC, lead by Artistic Director, Stephanie Dorrycott, unmistakably took the focal crown as the collective main course of the evening.

The four works presented were beautifully executed by the talented company members, Brittany Alness, Stephanie Dorrycott, Kristina Edwards, Elysia Merrill, Sammi Rosenfeld, and Halle Shulman. The evening as a whole felt like a celebration of the human experience through a very real and intricate, yet beautifully mundane, lens. With only six dancers in total, the choreographers managed to fill the stage with ease, submerging the audience into a world where the smallest of gestures in human interaction became the focal point, aided by a masterfully curated music score, and with setting provided by a video projections playing behind the performers for the last three pieces.

The opening piece *It's on Her*, choreographed by Sammi Rosenfeld, illustrated the process in which female traditions, customs, and social expectations, which are so ingrained in the present-day cultural nucleus, get passed down from generation to generation. Beginning with a spotlight on a single dancer and an otherwise pitch black stage, we witnessed the evolution of what began as a singular interpretation of one character's experience becoming the common language subsequently undertaken by the rest of the dancers onstage. The physical representation of the customs being passed down came in the form of a puppet-like prop (designed by Rachel Adler), which the dancers incorporated into their movement in the latter part of the piece. Most interesting was getting to watch the dancers put their individual stamps on the choreography as they each inherited the movement one by one. Though the timing of the dancing was in sync, each dancer had ever-so-slightly different interpretations of the repeating phrases, which made the piece feel more real and more honest.

*Altered Archives*, shown in two sections, choreographed by Dorrycott and Merrill, followed the opening piece. This second piece was the first to feature video projections behind the dancers and was previously performed as part of the Capital Fringe Festival. It featured a story on screen composed of phrases having to do with memories and how the past, present, and future are intertwined. Dorrycott's choreography seemed to be fueled by the weight of the past, while being inspired by dreams of the future. It's entrancing and seems never-ending. This piece showed the deep connection between Dorrycott's choreography and her dancers' work. It's as if they all speak the same language, but with slightly different inflections and accents.

The third piece was a cheerful duet, *Attract | Retract* performed by Edwards & Schulman, and it was followed by the final piece, *Concrete Devotion* which featured the full company. Both were choreographed by Dorrycott. *Attract | Retract* was well executed by the two dancers, who played a

game of tug and pull throughout the movement. However, they were dancing without shoes and with what seemed to be footed tights, which appeared to make them lose their balance often. The final piece was an ode to urban life. The projections and music transported the audience from the magical halls of the Kennedy Center to the heart of downtown during rush hour. Images of pedestrian steps flashed behind the dancers, who all seemed consumed by intricate movements, mirroring the dance one can witness each day on urban sidewalks. This piece highlighted Dorrycott's ability to innovatively combine movement with inanimate objects as the dancers weaved seamlessly in, and out, and through (yes, through), chairs at one point.

Motion X Dance DC represents Washington's dancing through its best. Where in New York, the dancing is primarily focused on technique and aesthetic, DC's dancing is more of an intellectual conversation held through movement, aiming not to be the loudest, nor constantly aspiring for perfection – but rather aiming to be insightful, flawed, and inspiring. The company's ensemble work is harmonious, seeming to be powered by breath. Even their floorwork felt to hover above ground, making the world they chauffeured us through seem ethereal. I was most surprised to read that the company has only been dancing together for three years. Their chemistry made it seem as if they had been trained at the same school for years. Motion X Dance DC is surely a company to watch, and a testament to the talent that harbors in DC. They can be seen next as part of the Atlas Intersections Festival.