

Inner demons take hold

Dramatic weather contributes all-too-appropriate angst to Aviva Geismar's latest creations in "The Fitting", a compelling program of troubled personalities.

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Rain pounded the darkened skylight setting the stage for Aviva Geismar's Drastic Action troupe as they played out those situations of extreme angst we might not expect in an evening's entertainment.

In "Sure Grip", Roberta Cooper flexes neck muscles we thought arcane and unnecessary. Her hands signal and flex with a grotesque beauty. She smiles with glee and flashes a glazed mischievous gaze. Her musicality convinces in this dance set to The Raymond Scott Orchestrette's rendition of Scott's dada jazz. With her sudden spins, silent laughter and self-abuse, Cooper's character seems to have handed the wheel to a private demon.

In the quieter title piece, "The Fitting" Geismar and Emily Bunning latch in a codependent duet. Together they nod as if drugged. At first inseparable, they create an endlessly challenging puzzle play with the lines of their white arms intertwined over matching two-tone costumes. Like playful animals, they fall and separate and then reconnect reveling in the pleasure of their attachment. Harold Meltzer's music accompanies in fits and starts leaving gaps of silence where anticipation mounts.

In "Durable Goods", Geismar and Vanessa Adato wear style-less blue pants and polo shirts. They frenetically slap post-its on themselves and on everything in sight. Alternately wrapping each other in packaging tape, they create a most restrictive environment. The cacophonous klezmer inspired music of Anabelle Chvostek adds to the discomfort of watching the dancers get in their own way.

Geismar is glamorous in "Unbidden and Unhinged." Her vaudevillian gestures and gyrations are maniacal. She licks her finger as if in preparation. In a beige suit with black trim she is capricious. Like Pierrot, and Cooper in "Sure Grip", the unhinged character struggles to maintain dignity during her farcical acts. The unbidden persona non grata inspires more compassion than laughs.

In Chvostek's score, double stops on a stringed instrument create a melodious accompaniment to a passage where two dancers represent innocent pleasure seekers. They wrestle, cloying, as lovers, breathing audibly and gasping.

A most appealing guardian angel in red, transcends as danced by Gina Jacobs. Two stern judges come in to spoil the fun of "Unbidden..." in the artaudian theatre, "self vs. self".

Noses down, The Drastic Action troupe doggedly tromps as if in an endless workday. Knee bandages show under restrictive gray skirts. They swing briefcases aggressively, stomping them on the floor and ramming them into each other's midsections. They do not, however, prove invulnerable and all these downtrodden fall, the stiff peter pan collars crushed, at last.

Geismar and Drastic Action stage inner demons in "The Fitting," extracted from the pressures and joys of life and love. They express the anxiety that is propagated in an anxious culture. In the darkest of moments, the self-abuse ends fatally. Bright passionate performances lift the inevitable cloud formed of this dredging.

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