



DANCE

Deborah Jowitt

Tuesday, November 30, 2004

Tere O'Connor Dance

The Kitchen

212.255.5793

Through Saturday

Frozen Mommy is as good a name as any for Tere O'Connor's new work. Like many of his pieces, it's mysterious and profoundly—bewitchingly—eccentric. The terrific performers jolt from petrified stillness into action and back with no discernible preparation. That action includes stints of reckless, veering, wheeling dancing (sometimes in meticulous unison); prolonged bouts of, say, screaming; and non sequiturs delivered in offhand tones. The score by O'Connor and James F. Baker is equally given to long silences and gunshot eruptions.

Is it just the title that incites images of childhood? Or is it also the extreme contrasts that shape the dominating—and ultimately predictable—rhythm? They bring to mind a child launching into a prolonged tantrum and suddenly turning off the roars. Some vignettes also hint fleetingly at childhood. Zombie-like, Christopher Williams leads Heather Olson—equally stiff and blank—in a circle; when he's finished, she holds up a warning hand (don't come any closer!), and when he touches her, she shoves him away and toddles off. If yelling "Whooooo!" seems like a good idea, everyone picks up on it. The danger of getting stuck in a groove always looms. After Williams has made himself dizzy whipping his head around, Hilary Clark—an entrancingly disheveled, sturdy, big-voiced blonde—mutters something about "those fuckin' head rolls" and then proceeds to laugh herself crazy.

Natural and unnatural spell each other. Olson feels tall, pale Matthew Rogers's forehead as if probing for a fever, but her touches become something odder and less identifiable. And not everything is funny. After a passage of vivid, jolting dancing, Erin Gerken topples (later a cap pistol is heard), and Williams takes a while to thrash on the floor, yanking her limp body on top of his own. At the very end, the five stand, frozen to their spots, for what seems an eternity (one spectator starts hopefully to clap). Finally Rogers falls, and as the lights (by Brian MacDevitt) bleach and fade, you can (just) hear him sobbing. Disturbing. Stunning.