

DANCE MAGAZINE

DD DORVILLIER

The Kitchen, NYC

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Reviewed by Eva Yaa Asantewaa



DD Dorvillier in *Nottthing Is Importantttt*
Photo by David Berge, Courtesy of The Kitchen

According to The Kitchen's Programs-At-A-Glance notes, the latest work by award-winning choreographer DD Dorvillier transforms “The Kitchen's black box theater into an intimate cinema.” But *Nottthing Is Importantttt*—subtitled “a suite of three conditions”—virtually turned this palace of experimental arts into the new Guantanamo.

“You'll have to check your coats and bags before you enter,” the house manager announced. “Otherwise, it will be dangerous for the dancers.” The logistics of this arrangement—a lobby full of patrons handing over baggage, umbrellas, and layers of winter gear to two coat check attendants—contributed to making this long, strange evening even longer. Not much could have made it stranger.

Duly “transformed,” The Kitchen's theater was reduced to a cramped area with the audience perched on small foam squares set close together. We faced a white, harshly lit performance floor and backdrop. Somewhere a violinist scraped out a few notes—like a warning from composer/sound installation artist Zeena Parkins—before dead silence fell. A piece of rubber hose flew across the space. There was no turning back.

The first section—“9 bodies”—featured an accumulating, shifting array of nine dancers in layers of rumpled exercise clothes in a palette of grey, black, and other somber colors. They moved and posed with workman-like, expressionless calm, like a holy order of ETs whose yoga-like discipline bears a purpose unknown to us. Peeling back one or another

item of clothing, each exposed a leg or belly button here, a neck and breastbone or a pair of buttocks there, adding patches of living color to Dorvillier's stark white canvas. The thought that there might be a secret rhythm to these splashes of impasto color kept things interesting.

The silence, which magnified an audience member's muffled cough and the impact of dancers' bodies on the floor, felt subtly manipulative and demoralizing. Making the slightest move—to retrieve a fallen program, scratch words in a notebook, or ease a strained lower back—resounded through the space. Eventually, periods of more dynamic action and occasional sound offered momentary cover. But then things took a dispiriting turn.

The cinema section—simply titled “a movie”—consisted of a senseless, nearly interminable live action and computer game animation video concocted by Dorvillier and a slew of collaborators. One repeated motif stands clearest in memory: the sight of Dorvillier in a Santa Claus costume, slamming a sledgehammer down upon row after row of metal folding chairs. Perhaps she visualized her audience sitting there.

For section three—“the darkpart”—handlers guided us into a chilly, pitch dark room where we again sat on cushions and listened to dancers running nearby, making other heard but unseen movements. Occasionally, a sliver of light gave us just enough vision to wonder if they were totally nude.

Suddenly all sound and sense of movement dropped away. A soft-spoken voice thanked us for coming. We were finally freed to go.