

Time Out

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Pure as the driven snow?

Hell, no! At least not Ann Liv Young's *Snow White*.
By Gia Kourlas

Ann Liv Young, just 26, has garnered as many rabid admirers as detractors. Her provocative and visually arresting brand of dance-theater—vulgar, raunchy, funny, earsplittingly loud—is a jolt to the senses. In her streamlined new show, *Snow White*, Young (with Michael Guerrero as the Queen and the Narrator and Liz Santoro as the Prince) dances, has sex with a dildo, screams her head off and sings along to music by Styx, Beyoncé, Mary J. Blige and Pat Benatar. A graduate of Virginia's Hollins University, the North Carolina native may enjoy making a spectacle of herself onstage, but in person, with her lilting Southern accent and impeccable manners, she's practically a debutante. She recently spoke about her latest project at a diner near the Kitchen, where her newest version of *Snow White* will do its best to shock the hell out of you. Or not. She's fine either way.

Why *Snow White*?

I wanted to do a children's story simply because usually children aren't allowed into the shows. The story's pretty simple. I was kind of like, Lord, how am I going to do this? Because it's kind of boring in a way. I was really interested in the idea of this woman who's looking for a prince—though really, the prince is looking for her. She has a very messed-up relationship with her mom. So I mostly just wanted to play with how that could apply to a situation today. And I'm really interested in the idea of how people view me in the work.

What do you mean?

There's this stigma attached to the work or to me. I don't go to shows, and I don't really hang out with other choreographers, so there's this idea that I'm only interested in my work. I wanted to play with that. *Snow White* clearly cares about everyone but herself. But it's me. And I clearly care about *only* myself and nobody else. [Laughs] I really wanted to take those two things and, though not intentionally mesh them, have them in my head.

What do you have in common with *Snow White*?



CHILD'S PLAY
Young transforms
Snow White.

We like animals. She talks to the deer and the rabbits, and they all love her and eat out of her hands. She's very hopeful. I think I'm certainly hopeful. I like her style. She wears the same dress every day, and I'm totally into that. I think the idea of a superhero never having to change her clothes is very cool. She's very understanding. She's determined. She runs through the woods away from the hunter who's trying to take her heart. And she's very domestic, which I feel I am in a lot of ways.

In the brothers Grimm's version, the Queen actually dances to death. Does yours?

Not really. But in Paris, she *did* dance

to death in a way—we did a duet to Whitney Houston's "I'm Every Woman," and it was a hard-core, high-powered, bust-our-asses dance. At a show in Amsterdam, I screamed at Michael the whole time. I threw a microphone at him and it broke, and the audience thought it was hilarious. That's the thing: People don't know if it's pretend or real. That night, I had Michael leave the stage to find another microphone. When he walked back out, he looked like somebody had just called his mother a whore 500 times. And the audience just died laughing. It's funny to see what people think is funny. They like it when people are humiliated.

It's sad, right? Sometimes I think what you're doing is a theatrical version of Howard Stern.

It's like I tell Michael every day: "I hate people so much." I feel like my work makes me not want to be around people. I lose faith. I work with them, and I see such ugly sides, and then when I see these audiences and what they respond to, it makes me so sad. There are some days when I'm so sick of people. Most days. It's terrible.

How much sex is in *Snow White*? Why is it still important?

It's not bad at all. I have to say it's a pretty nontrashy piece. I'm doing it

"When I see what audiences respond to, it makes me so sad."

because it's *Snow White*. She's fucking having sex onstage and the Prince has a huge dildo! Clearly, it's almost cartoon.

Why is penetration necessary?

I want it to be visible that [the dildo] goes in me. I like that dialogue of "Did she or didn't she?" I'm interested in that curiosity or investigation or skepticism. There have been nights where I didn't do it because I was bleeding or in pain, or I just didn't want to. One night, we ran out of K-Y Jelly, and I faked it. I do whatever I feel like in this piece. One night I stopped the show. I was like, "I'm tired and don't want to do this anymore."

Is *Snow White* a feminist piece?

I don't know what the fuck it is. We're actually doing two shows in Italy this year, and one is a women's-gender yadda yadda. I feel like this piece is so open-ended. I see it more as a solo. It's almost like the only way that this show can work is if I can be *that* aggressive. I think that's what I'm interested in right now. I'm playing with control.

Ann Liv Young is at the Kitchen Wed 14-Mar 17 and Mar 21-24.

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Dance