

THE KITCHEN

CENTER FOR
VIDEO, MUSIC
AND DANCE

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Molissa Fenley and Dancers provided their own accompaniment in her piece, *Mix*, presented at the Kitchen. For a review, see page 43.

Molissa Fenley must have made thousands of choices in choreographing *Mix*, which she and three others danced at the Kitchen on September 13-16. How else could she have made fifty minutes of synchronized activity for dancers who were also providing their own accompaniment, using their clapping hands, small sandpaper-covered blocks, and maracas by turns?

Setting a brisk pace with their sharp, unison clapping, the dancers moved in pairs, swapping short movement sequences like couples in a square dance. One sequence resembled a wiggly backwards walk on a tightrope, another a fast flurry of hopscotch; a third, like a folk dance, combined flat-footed stamping with a deeply curved back. Several microphones, taped to the floor at either side of the stage, manufactured an extra beat that seemed to come from the next room.

The short sequences shifted without transition. Now all four ran in a circle, five steps and a skip, lunged to the center and backstroked to the stage's four corners. Now each ran in tiny steps along individual paths, kicking their stiffened legs out behind them.

About halfway through the hour, I realized I had seen all the movement, all the shifts and wriggles and stomps, all the overlapping sequences, all the repetition. But the movement kept coming, as if Fenley had opened a spigot and left it running, recycling its own water.

As my attention wandered from the dance to the dancers, I began to wonder. Had Fenley used one man on purpose or just to complete the foursome? Why did no one but Elizabeth Streb ever smile? Was she supposed to? Was the one false start, and the abrupt exchange of words it occasioned, accidental or intentional?

Clearly, their keeping their eyes locked on each others' faces helped them stay together, but it also kept the audience from becoming involved even with the individual dancers. I found nothing involving in their dance and, as it wore on, its patterns and steps became wholly incidental to the dancers' ability to execute them in the correct, rapid-fire sequence.

Without disrespect to the dancers' unflagging application, I felt the audience responded less to *what* they had accomplished than to the fact *that* they had accomplished it. The fault was not theirs but Fenley's, for wasting their energy on her inflexible aimless choices.



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