

Attitude

The Dancers' Magazine

A t t i t u d e

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Tere O'Connor, Hi Everybody!

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Tere O'Connor's work is a definitive product of our time, appealing to the split-second attention spans of multi-taskers. Some artists choose one idea or emotion on which to focus, giving the work a specific feel or location in the context of their body of work. Hi Everybody! is all over the charts, careening frenetically from idea to emotion to storyline to character, making great dramatic hay with scenes clashing together—big claps of thunder, bursts of rain and the ensuing rush of negative ions.

The hour-long program leans on the six performers, this season helped immensely by the wonderful Rob Besserer. His experience lends dance-world gravity to this talented but goofy group, and while his strong grace does not surprise, his comedic speaking and acting parts impressively do. The others in the ensemble (Rebecca Hilton, Marc Kenson, Heather Olson, Chrysta Parkinson and Greg Zuccolo) are excellent, with equal acting and movement skills, not to mention heavy comic lifting. Their individual quirks and physical traits quickly endear them to the audience, and

by the end of the evening, you feel like waving back to them as they take bows.

Spoken sections address concerns of the utmost serious nature — aging, sickness, bereavement, gay rights—and the attendant problems of retirement funds and lack of health insurance and benefits. Just when the subject sinks in, O'Connor yanks you out of the abyss with a slapsticky bit of comedy, or a dance or gestural vignette. When dance is performed, it can be bizarrely flaccid or infelicitous, due in part to the brevity of the sections, and in part to the modern style, which is soft and flowing. One memorable sequence has the dancers moving in circles with their arms spread like wings as if soaring; Besserer shines by opening his sternum and exposing his throat, and his long arms exaggerate his line. It was one of just a handful of real dance phrases, and one to take delight in.

I left The Kitchen in a happy state, satisfied. I had laughed throughout the program, sometimes nervously, sometimes from its audacity, but most often

from plain silliness. I had seen some dance, and even though I felt a bit dance-starved, it reassured me that O'Connor has dance chops—his bio told me so. This meagerness of dance was cancelled out by the fact that he **COULD** choreograph much more, he simply chose not to. The performance appealed to the audience it drew, no surprise in downtown New York dance. But the performance was a bit of preaching to the converted; the in-jokes and brittle sense of self-pity rang true but hollow, leaving a bitter aftertaste. We all left the theater chuckling, nodding in agreement, and patting ourselves on the back for being in the know, but the next day I felt I had been tricked into taking part in the company's little conspiracy.

In terms of dance which incorporates theater, irony, and kitsch, Hi Everybody! is a unique hybrid. O'Connor knows how to provoke a reaction from the audience, I'm just not convinced he can do it without cheap emotional tricks. Now if he would just start saving for his retirement...
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