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December 14, 2012

Adrienne Truscott's "...Too Freedom..." at The Kitchen

Posted on 14 December 2012 by Lydia Mokdessi



Adrienne Truscott in "...too freedom..." (Photo by Paula Court)

Adrienne Truscott's *"...Too Freedom..."* premiered at The Kitchen last week and runs through Dec. 15 (tickets \$15). The work involves eight performers, two of whom are Spanish-speaking day laborers Adan Escalante Vazquez and José Manosalvas who (as told to Marissa Perel) are paid the same wage they usually make. Truscott is interested in probing what "people, performers and audience are paying attention to once the performance has begun," and she provides no shortage of stimuli. The performers fill every administrative role, with Neal Medlyn working the box office (his real-life part-time job), Truscott handing out programs, and a deadpan Gillian Walsh leading sheepish latecomers to their seats as spotlights light the way (it comes off as good-humored, not scolding). Truscott begins by pacing briskly through the space, accompanied by the amplified sound of clicking shoes. She changes into costume on stage, enlisting a front-row spectator to button the back of her shimmery unitard. The boundaries that conventionally define performance (beginning when the lights go down, ending with a curtain call) and performers (not seen before they are costumed and on stage) are called into question when the mechanics of producing a show are revealed so clearly.

It seems important in *"...Too Freedom..."* that the work that is typically kept out of sight is placed in the foreground. Just as the performers double as house managers and ticket takers, the people whose role is usually behind-the-scenes are here made a focal point. Adan Escalante Vazquez, José Manosalvas and Pailo Heitz (a voice-over artist who assisted in hiring the two wage laborers) spend the hour-long performance constructing a three-walled wooden set piece.

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Meanwhile, Medlyn, Walsh, Laura Sheedy and Mickey Mahan remove their shoes and transform their t-shirts into peculiar costumes with the undoing of snaps and yanking down of sleeves, and settle in at a small table to watch a teapot that continuously pours into a china cup. They behave like they're on their lunch break, not talking and looking vaguely bored as they dismantle and calmly eat an entire roast chicken.

Truscott spends most of the piece in her own world, listening to something on her headphones that we never hear and going through a series of linear, upright phrases. Her arms slice outwards and her chin thrusts forward in coordination with quick, grapevine-ing footwork, staccato stomping, and manic blinking. Medlyn dances next, offering a more straightforward version of what we've seen from Truscott, joined shortly by the others. They dance solo and as a small herd, zigzagging back and forth in a movement language that is angular and unembellished. It feels like a phrase that would appear early in a rehearsal process, to be manipulated and deconstructed later on. When Truscott returns, we feel like we are watching her rehearse alone. She compulsively repeats the same tics and floor patterns and adjusts her hair, bra, and shorts like she's preparing to make a grand entrance. We get the sense that she would go on like this all night, but Manosalvas interrupts her to say that they have finished their work. She replies that she needs them to do one thing before going home, and Manosalvas, Vazquez and Heitz line up to perform a simple dance phrase, stepping side-to-side and swinging their arms in unison.

"...Too Freedom..." asks questions about the nature of labor: how do performers and performance-makers approach their tasks? And how we approach our task of watching? There's a lot going on, and it's all laid out for us to experience simultaneously; a structure being built, props doing things on their own, costumes morphing onstage, frequent sound changes, numerous dance phrases, a variety of personalities and interaction... Somehow, it all adds up to something that feels complete, poignant, and deeply satisfying.

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