

The Kitchen Center for Video and Music

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Two-Faced Woman

By Amanda Smith

DANA REITZ is a gifted performer of unusual luminosity—what one writer has been moved to call “some quiet magic percolating beneath the body’s material scrim.” She is also emerging as a choreographer of depth and intelligence. Her *Journey for Two Sides: A Solo Dance Duet* at the Kitchen was conceived as a dialogue between two aspects of the self, an exploration of the classic dichotomy between the logical and the intuitive, the intellect and the emotions, rendered abstractly in modern dance terms.

On the left of two low, white platforms placed side by side, Reitz, as Character A, progressed toward the audience, her long-limbed, lithe, trim body held erect as she stepped crisply in angular little marches that addressed themselves to various points on the compass. Her movements emphasized the linear: They were clear without being hard-edged or sharp, plush even when they were oblique. From time to time, she called out her counts with an emphatic, “One, two.” Her Character A was more than structured:

It had about it an uprightness that suggested the righteous, the dogmatic, and a coldness, as if the emotions were an uncomfortable region for it to inhabit.

Reitz alternated between the two platforms, her movement each time progressing toward the audience like waves coming toward us from the horizon to the shore. As Character B, on the right-hand platform, her uprightness yielded to a willowy quality, and she worked in off-centered, curly, spirally, squiggly, flinging phrases. Once, she skittered about the platform, hands flailing about her head, a particularly scatterbrained child, and later she inched her way along, toes curled over the edge of the platform. Occasionally, she was bouncy-jivvy. Once, she

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broke the silence with a hum that gradually grew into a caw.

From time to time, the lights dimmed, and behind her, two sets of dual video monitors, one atop the other, flashed on, underscoring the physical differences between A and B. The prerecorded videotapes focused first on the feet, then feet and legs, finally the torso. The feet interested me most: They kneaded the floor like experienced hands making bread, their versatility and articulateness suggesting whole personages. But torso shots—contrasting the straight torso and the twisting one—were the clearest delineations of the differences between the two characters.

In Reitz’s current work, only the pattern and the movement qualities are set. (“What’s choreographed,” she has said, “is the form, the space, the aura, the time, the rhythm, where it’s going. But the movement, the actual steps, are not. I like finding ways of working that are not performed.”) In *Journey for Two Sides*, the concept isn’t merely the delineation of two characters, but the exploration of how one side informs and contributes to the other. (“They both help each other develop, but they don’t become the same thing.”) Once, Reitz ran in a huge circle from platform to platform, symbolizing the unity and division of the two sides.

But from moment to moment, from performance to performance, one side or the other is likely to surface and become dominant. Character B “won” the performance I saw. She was finally a little child, petulant, likeably silly sometimes, abandoned, heading for adolescence—imperfect but lovable.



E. LEE WHITE

Dana Reitz: Two complementary halves make a whole.