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# Hipster

By Joan Acocella

**Donna Uchizono**

*San Andreas*

At the Kitchen

November 15 through 18

**Donna Uchizono's new *San Andreas*** begins with a three- or four-minute solo for Uchizono's hips. As the lights go up, she stands there all alone with her back to us (through the whole solo she never turns around) and her hips go into action. They chug, they shake, they slam this way and that, and not with the rhythm of the universe-affirming accents of one of your multicultural pelvis dances—which is what you might have been expecting, since the music is traditional Tahitian drumming and Uchizono is wearing a sort of vaguely Polynesian-patterned thing—but, strange to say, with the accents of human speech, *angry* human speech. Her hips are having a fit, and they do it the way her mouth would. Slam! They make a big point and pause for effect. Yamma, yamma, yamma! They add a number of subclauses. Whack, whack! They ask us what we have to say to that. Smack! They don't want to hear anymore, and out goes the light.

The effect is marvelously witty—to see the language of the hyperarticulate voice and face transferred to the blunt instrument of the hips—and this wit is carried over into the long dance for five people that occupies the rest of this piece. Some of the group dancing is taken up with Trisha Brown-type slip-and-slide partnering; this is its least successful aspect, for Uchizono and her dancers haven't quite gotten the hang of this loose couple work, and a number of the last-minute catches are last minute indeed. But what is so fresh and witty in the group dances is the way unison work keeps breeding dissent within its ranks. Together the dancers will be executing a phrase, all neat and synchronized, when suddenly one person slips into some other gear and begins doing something different.

The funniest instance was an interpolated hula. There were all five dancers swaying their hips and making lovely hula hands when all of a sudden one dancer, the excellent Jodi Melnick, more or less went nuts. She came off the beat, she yanked herself all around, she fell apart. Had this happened in a more regimented dance, the effect would have been trite: in a world of conformity, the lonely individual breaks ranks, blah blah. But in this sweet, laid-back hula, it was just mysterious and droll and profoundly lifelike. Overleaping the specific, Uchizono went directly to the general truth: the pleasure of making and unmaking, the satisfaction of pattern and the violation of pattern.

As these anarchies accumulated—always followed by a restoration of order—strange gestures began floating to the surface of the dance. Uchizono would shuffle over to Melnick and shake her hair at her. Or she would extend her hands as if to receive something, though God knows what. Melnick would just look at her blankly, without understanding and without complaint. And that's what this dance was: a drama of the loose part against the structure, caprice against reason, and maybe—for the Tahitian drums and hula dance can't have just flown in out of nowhere—of urban doubt against village certainties.

The wit of the dance drew on that of the music, Tom Cora's bluesy score for amplified cello (played by himself) and drums (Samm Bennett). Low moans, horrid crashes, long sighs that seemed to rise from the bowels of the earth: the score, like the dance, seemed to put a question to the universe without really expecting an answer, and also with a certain secret pleasure, as if enjoying the chance to have a good, long rant. ■