

The New York Times

May 19, 2015

THE Arts

A Performance in Theory

With a background in classical ballet and a compulsion to re-frame the tools of the theater, Yve Laris Cohen has carved out an unusual place as a choreogra-

**GIA
KOURLAS**
**DANCE
REVIEW**

pher. He plays with the materials that make a dance possible — the floors, the walls and, now, the curtains. Part of his practice involves the installation

and dismantling of objects. For three nights of performances at Danspace Project recently, it was a portable stage used by New York City Ballet; at the Whitney Museum of American Art last spring, it was a piece of a wall.

In “Fine,” presented Thursday at the Kitchen, the materials intended for the work never appear, and the performance discussed never comes to pass. We hear from an engineering consultant (Ed Reilly), an engineer (Jeremy Billig), a technical adviser (Karen Walcott), an architectural consultant (Zach Cohen) and a structural adviser (Scott Lydiard), and through them learn what “Fine” might have looked like given sufficient resources and time.

Mr. Laris Cohen’s specialists are isolated from one another; at his cue, they answer questions about what he intended for the original piece and the technical hurdles involved. The plan was to

‘Fine’

The Kitchen

build a large wall as a sprung dance floor on a rake, with the slope intended to afford the audience a better perspective. The wall would slowly tilt toward viewers during the performance pushing them out of the theater.

While there are dry, technical ramblings by the specialists, “Fine” (pronounced fee-nay, for the musical term that marks the end of a piece) has the tightly choreographed feel of an intimate radio play. Certain sections — for example, when Ms. Walcott talk about the rake gradation — are fascinating, and Mr. Lydiard is a delight (“I didn’t quite understand how you danced on a wall, he said, “but I was too embarrassed to ask”), though the real art of “Fine” is in its treatment of the black box theater.

There are no chairs at the performance; instead of a wall, we are pressed up against a black curtain that is raised and lowered throughout the piece. A side light bathes down, treating us to the most rarefied experience in a theater, that of being onstage. In the final moments, there is no chatter, no excess — only a sensation of pure peace.