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By *admin*

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Meta Title:

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Zachary Whittenburg

Excerpt:

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Abstract:

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Meta Description:

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Physically, Richard Move doesn't bear close enough a resemblance to Martha Graham to trick you into thinking that it's 1963 and you're at the 92nd Street Y [2]. Close your eyes, however, and his mastery of the lilting cadence with which Graham delivered her grand pronouncements on performance [3] is often uncanny. As the MC of two back-to-back shows of a mixed bill called "Moves" at the MCA Stage [4], the third of seven free offerings of the Chicago Dancing Festival [5], the TEDGlobal Fellow [6] gave thoughtfully written introductions for four very different, chamber-sized pieces before performing himself, as Graham, in the choreographer's 1930 solo, Lamentation [7].

Move's gently comedic take on Graham charms; more than anything, he comes across as exactly like the dance maker, only with a better sense of humor. By phone, he told me recently [8], "at this point, I am *the* Graham scholar." He backed it up by weaving lesser-known facts about her life into his monologues, such as an anecdote about a trip Graham took here with Louis Horst, who brought her to the Art Institute of Chicago [9], where she was floored and inspired by the paintings of Kandinsky. "I knew then, how I must dance," Move announced in her voice. I'm not sure whether that's verbatim, but I trust that it's true.

In recent years, Move has received the Martha Graham Dance Company ^[10]'s stamp of approval. Two of its current dancers, Tadej Brdnik and Xiaochuan Xie, performed the Shaker Interior scene ^[11] from Robert Wilson's "Snow on the Mesa." (Given the evening's conceit, Move was able to introduce them as "mem-bers of my come-pany.") In silence, Brdnik entered from upstage left, kneeled at the right end of a long, white bench and launched into an extreme state with the start of Colin McPhee's climactic score. He made a horizontal, open hoop with his arms, palms down.

From the opposite corner of the stage, Xie floated into view, topless and in a floor-length, white skirt by Donna Karan. In contrast with current trends, where no piece, no matter how short, leaves even a square inch of floor untouched by feet or other body parts, the pair's travel during *Shaker Interior* could be mapped with just a few long lines and arching semicircles. Rather, its god is in its details, such as when Xie pulls her offered hand away from Brdnik's reach; or how it ends, with Brdnik kneeling as before, but at the other end of the bench, while Xie reprises his entrance, but with a closed hoop of arms and her fingers arranged into shapes.

Move so relished delivering the title of another duet, by Faye Driscoll and Jesse Zaritt, that he flubbed it, albeit just barely. (The precision of his use of language as Graham inspires awe.) *If you pretend you are drowning I'll pretend I am saving you* is an in-progress excerpt from Driscoll's *not...not*, set to premiere in New York in April 2012.

Even unfinished, with no sound and presented out of context, it's on its way to brilliance.

Two diagonal strips of yellow tape—noisily laid while Move finished his introduction—met downstage center at a pile of objects wrapped in shocking pink chiffon, suggesting a funnel pointed at the audience with a filter yet to be understood. Driscoll and Zaritt met upstage left and whispered privately to one another. ("We're playing a lot with trying to both satisfy and debunk expectations that you might have around a man and a woman on the stage," Driscoll told me during a phone call ^[12] exactly four weeks ago.) Indeed, nothing in *If you pretend* was predictable, although higher structures did reveal themselves after the fact. It's a series of cooperative, then competing fits of state, followed by the assault of a charged, rapid-fire game of dress-up, as if Ethel and Lucy were in a stereotype, not chocolate, factory.

One moment during which Zaritt mimed exorcising Driscoll's crotch as she laid supine, writhing, was echoed in Driscoll's long-distance lassoing of Zaritt's manic muscle-flexing and rockstar posturing. As if caught in a tractor beam, Driscoll dropped the windmilling of her arm and drifted along the taped diagonal, throbbing with arousal at his act. In a flash, Zaritt shifted into full-tilt, skipping sissy mode, mincing about the stage like Louis Virtel ^[13] after a key bump. The two met at the pink pile and Zaritt fell to his hands and knees; Driscoll, straddling his neck, animated the following and other items, in various combinations, as he handed them to her:

- Red feathers
- Green grapes and other fruit
- Black glasses
- A pink wig
- A blonde wig
- A black cape
- A flower, in the mouth
- A pacifier, in the mouth

- A black beard
- A leopard-print shawl worn like a *hijab*
- A giant lollipop
- A strand of fake pearls
- A stunt knife with a retractable blade
- Red rope

At the close of *If you pretend*, Zaritt stood almost offstage, bemused at Driscoll's sudden consumption by anger. He applauded sarcastically and her dark mood softened at the sound.

Habituation, a female trio performed by [Lucky Plush Productions](#) ^[14], and the men's duet from *MOTOR*, by Brian Brooks, completed the bill. They were about as different as two short works can be. The former was lighthearted, inquisitive, self-referential and a race against the clock (an iPhone with an alarm set, placed at the start on the floor). The latter, as on Monday night [at the festival's opening-night gala](#) ^[15], was a minimalist exercise composed thoughtfully enough to remain compelling, seemingly a glimpse at a short span within an eternity.

As Move-as-Martha said at the show's start, dance today is at a point where modern, postmodern, post-postmodern, contemporary, classical, neoclassical, minimalist and maximalist don't mean much. There is only good dance and bad dance and he said that there would be none of the latter. He was right.

The 2011 Chicago Dancing Festival continues [tonight at the Auditorium Theatre](#) ^[16]; on [Friday 26 all day](#) ^[17] at the Chicago Cultural Center and [at 6pm at the MCA Stage](#) ^[18]; and on [Saturday 27 at the Pritzker Pavilion](#) ^[19] in Millennium Park. Admission is free.

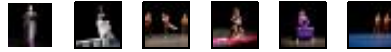
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Richard Move as Martha Graham

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- [3] http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2q_rsG4R7qI
- [4] <http://timeoutchicago.com/arts-culture/theater/166725/mca-stage>
- [5] <http://chicagodancingfestival.com/>
- [6] <http://timeoutchicago.com/arts-culture/dance/14891619/interview-richard-move>
- [7] <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vJHrGpw0zj0>
- [8] <http://timeoutchicago.com/arts-culture/dance/14895257/richard-move-the-immortal-martha-graham>
- [9] <http://timeoutchicago.com/arts-culture/dance/165343/network-king>
- [10] <http://marthagraham.org/company/>
- [11] <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iBlm5AsOsal>
- [12] <http://timeoutchicago.com/arts-culture/dance/14891609/interview-faye-driscoll>
- [13] <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7K-3iU-StmI>

- [14] <http://luckyplush.com/>
- [15] <http://timeoutchicago.com/arts-culture/dance/14907637/live-review-chicago-dancing-festival-2011-opening-night-gala-and-benefit>
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