

DANCE | “Principles of Pulse”: It’s all about the Rhythm

By Sheila Regan, TC Daily Planet

August 21, 2010



In the program notes for Principles of Pulse, Rhythmically Speaking producers Erinn Liebhard and Heather P. Westerlund write that they’ve expanded the production, which premiered last year at Bedlam Theatre, “beyond jazz dance vernacular to explore jazz’s most basic driving principles: dance based on rhythm.” True to their word, the two young producers have put together a wonderfully diverse mix of traditional jazz dance, more experimental forms, tap, improvisation, Afro-Cuban-inspired dance, and West African dance mixed with beat-boxing.

Interspersed between the acts are little demonstrations, where the choreographers give mini-lessons about their particular styles. Tap extraordinaire Ellen Keane had the audience practice call and response, with the audience repeating the increasingly complicated rhythms she would stomp and clap for us. Heather P. Westerlund gave a demo on improvisation, which she said could be used in the development of a piece, or could be used in the performance itself in the case of structured improv. (Erin Liebhard’s piece Did I Do That? utilized both kinds of improv.) Finally, Kenna Sarge’s group gave a demonstration on polyrhythms, where the audience once again attempted to clap in rhythm (mostly we failed, but had fun doing so).
view counter

I really appreciated the prominence that music played throughout the show. This was especially the case in Kenna Sarge’s piece, RhythmBox, where the dancers were literally jumping between playing the drums and dancing, with Terrill “Carnage” Woods’ beat-boxing underlaying the West African rhythms.

The dancers in Jeffrey Peterson’s a ritmo also let the music live in their bodies. Peterson chose some wonderfully sultry music by SMV and Barrio Jazz Gang, and the dancers seemed to be having a lot of fun as they swayed their hips in their ruffled skirts. They slid their bare feet along the floor, flicked their wrists, created diagonals with their bodies, and leaned on each other in what looked like a fantastic dance party at a beach cabin. The dancers really owned the music, and it showed.

Even in Jennifer Glaws’s Breakable Walls, which featured experimental jazz mixing by Nathan K Rockswold, the choreography let the music take the lead. While Rockswold’s mix of Styrofoam and Pan Sonic may have been less accessible than some of the other musical selections of the evening, Glaws let the trippy experimentation of the music influence the piece. She worked well playing with tempo, as the dancers became like pendulums with shifting weight as they moved about the stage.

Co-Producer Liebhard choreographed one piece in the show, but where she really stood out for me was as a performer. The young dancer is simply a joy to watch. She has a stage presence that radiates, and the lines she creates with her body are just gorgeous. While I hope she continues to develop her art as a choreographer, I would be disappointed if she didn’t also continue to dance with more local companies.

Note: Before the performance, Lighting Designer Lindsay Woolward made an announcement that the show was dedicated to Jeff Bartlett, former artistic director of The Southern Theater and current Dance Community Liaison at the new Cowles Center for Dance and Performing Arts, who was focusing lights in a Genie lift on Thursday when the lift fell over. For updates on Jeff, see CaringBridge.com.

Photo by Jillian Denae Photography, courtesy Bedlam Theatre

/ DANCE

Rhythmically Speaking: Principles of Pulse **Bedlam Theater**

Rhythm rules in this eclectic evening of dance. *Principles of Pulse* presents various twists on classic jazz dance themes that are showing up in various forms of innovative, contemporary choreography. Forays into improvisation, call and response, hip hop, rhythm tap, and Afro-Cuban fusions by some of the area's most accomplished and syncopated choreographic voices should send Bedlam Theater (which is soon closing) out with a highly metrical bang. The evening includes works by percussive dance diva Karla Grotting, tap queen Ellen Keane, West African dance and drumming powerhouse Kenna Sarge, wild and witty Jeffrey Peterson, and Latina super talent Cynthia Gutierrez-Garner. The show is produced by Erinn Liebhard and Heather P. Westerlund, indefatigable young Turks who, along with creating their own work, are revitalizing jazz-inflected dance in these parts. Make a reservation—last year all shows sold out. \$18/\$20 at the door. 7:30 p.m. Thursday through Saturday. 1501 S. Sixth St., Minneapolis; 612.341.1038. **Through Saturday**
—Linda Shapiro

thursday 19-saturday 21

"**PRINCIPLES OF PULSE**" takes over the Bedlam Theatre for three nights of rhythm-based local dance. bedlamtheatre.org



sunday 22

Learn more about local, sustainable and organic food by checking out demos and samples from Peace Coffee, ChinDian Café and chef Robin Asbell at the **HOMEGROWN EXPERIENCE**, organized by the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board. Local producers will also be on hand to answer questions. Nicollet Island Pavilion; thomegrownexperience.com

19²⁰ **21** **22** ²³ ²⁴ ²⁵ **26** ²⁷ **28** ²⁹ **30** ³¹



thursday 26-monday 6

You know it. You love it. The **MINNESOTA STATE FAIR** continues the tradition of gluttony, people-watching and farm equipment beginning August 26. This year's performers include Rush, Carrie Underwood, "Weird Al" Yankovic and KISS. mnstatefair.org

saturday 28

Mill City Farmers Market is the place to be for tomatophiles. **SALSA FEST** is your chance to taste-test different tomato varieties and sample salsas to your heart's content. [Mill City Farmers Market; millcityfarmersmarket.org](http://millcityfarmersmarket.org)

monday 30 & tuesday 31

Whether you're a die-hard fan or pop music is just your guilty pleasure, **LADY GAGA**'s two-night stay is bound to be a spectacle. [Xcel Energy Center; xcelenergycenter.com](http://xcelenergycenter.com)

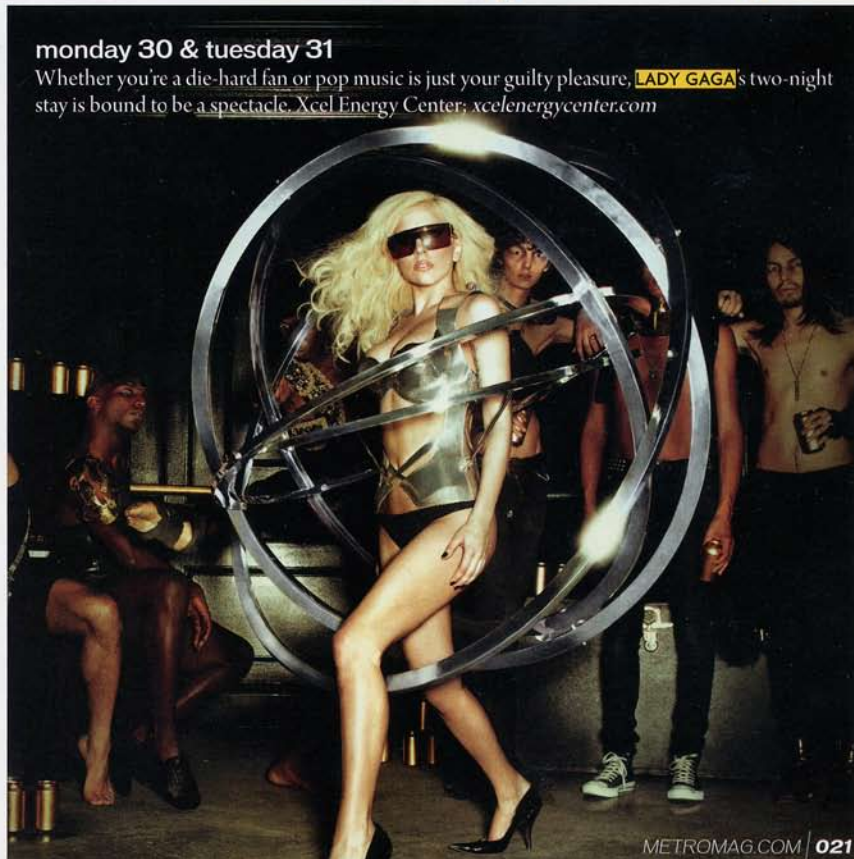


PHOTO: COURTESY MINNESOTA FRINGE FESTIVAL, CRAIG VANDERSCHAEGEN, T. CHARLES ERICKSON, KEVIN WESTENBERG, GREGORY COSTANZO, JILLIAN DENAE PHOTOGRAPHY, ERIC MELZER. COURTESY EXCEL ENERGY CENTER

Thursday

Dance › Rhythmically Speaking



JILLIAN DENAE PHOTOGRAPHY

Thursday-Saturday: Bye-bye, Bedlam. In a few weeks, a West Bank hub of theatrical activity will close to become a mosque. But first, it will conclude its final tenure as "Fringe Central," the post-show watering hole of choice for Fringe Festival audiences and performers, and host three evenings of new dance works by some of the Twin Cities' most interesting choreographers and dancers. Jazz and rhythm are the linchpins of "Principles of Pulse," a collection of pieces assembled by Erinn Liebhard and Heather P. Westerlund and featuring the choreography of Cynthia Gutierrez-Garner, Jennifer Glaws, Karla Grotting, Sarah Jabar, Ellen Keane, Jeffery Peterson, Kenna Sarge and Karis Sloss. 7:30 p.m.; Bedlam Theatre, 1501 S. Sixth St., Mpls.; \$20-\$18; 612-341-1038 or bedlamtheatre.org.

— Rob Hubbard

DANCE



JILLIAN DENAE PHOTOGRAPHY

JAZZ AT BEDLAM

Thursday-Saturday: Jazz, like most other dance forms, comprises many distinct personalities and styles. In "Principles of Pulse: An Evening of Rhythm-based Choreography," nine local dancemakers focus on the improvisational and call-and-response aspects of jazz-based movement — some of which can be found in hip-hop, rhythm tap and other contemporary dance expressions. This lively sampler evening features **Jennifer Glaws, Karla Grotting, Cynthia Gutierrez-Garner, Sarah Jabar, Ellen Keane, Erinn Liebhard** (above, left, with Sarah Beck-Esmay, Megan Mohr, Heather P. Westerlund and Natalie Bucey), **Jeffrey Peterson, Kenna Sarge** and **Karis Sloss**. This is also a chance to experience and appreciate the eclectic charm of Bedlam Theatre's West Bank space before it closes in early September. (7:30 p.m. Thu.-Sat. \$18-\$20. Bedlam Theatre, 1501 S. 6th St., Mpls. 612-341-1038. <http://bedlamtheatre.org>.)

CAROLINE PALMER