New Moves And Existential Musings From Liss Fain, Erika Shuch

Rita Felciano | San Francisco Bay Guardian | September, 2008

Coming right off the top of the new season, two local choreographers, Liss Fain and Erika Chong Shuch, have thrown a spotlight on the marvelous richness of Bay Area dance. These women couldn't be more different from each other. One creates cool, intricately flowing balletic dances; the other, spunky and quixotic dance theater.

At YBCA, in its Forum space, Erika Shuch Performance Project's existential musing, After All, Part I, engaged with its excellent performers. The stage oozed with talent and energy, thanks to the eminent, wistful dancer Joe Goode, singer-composer Dwayne Calizo, charming teenage vocalist Gracie Solis, percussionist-actor Matthias Bossi, and actor Beth Wilmurt, not to mention a quartet of dancers and a motley movement chorus of 23.

Drawing from a number of writers, Chong Shuch fashioned dances, monologues, and songs into a circular structure about, well, the meaning of life — as seen mainly from the perspective of a goldfish. Shuch has gathered — and created — marvelous material but it needs to be more organically shaped.

Individual segments work well. Wilmurt inhabited Michelle Carter's sparkling text as naturally as her pisca-sartorial accoutrements of sunglasses and form-hugging sequins. Though plagued with what appeared to be vocal difficulties, Calizo's character of a hobo Santa Claus who carries everything with him was a fanciful creation. Bossi roared through Octavio Solis' "Last Psalm" (an inversion of "The Lord Is My Shepherd") with a mixture of bravado and cynicism. Given the current political climate, he was as hilarious as he was chilling.