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## Lucky Plush Super? Heros @ Harris

BY [CHICAGOSTAGESTANDARD](http://CHICAGOSTAGESTANDARD.COM) · MARCH 5, 2016  
Dance Review by Angela Allyn

**Rating 3 stars out of 4**



The new work *Trip the Light Fantastic: The Making of Super Strip* by Lucky Plush Productions is smart, funny and up to the minute. Choreographer/Director Julia Rhoads made sure it has social commentary, terrific visuals, and high production values. It's quite verbal, as much talking as dancing, with lots of inside the dance world/ not for profit world/save the world causes jokes, and the evening feels like we are eavesdropping on a conversation more than watching a finished piece. That looseness comes in part from the company's use of improv, but it could also be something deeper. The dancing is springy, athletic, easy, virtuosic in a laid back way, and the ensemble work is tight, like a school of fish swimming and switching directions when the shark arrives. Liviu Pasare's video/ media design, operated onstage by the ever calm Sojourner Wright, is a compelling marriage of media and what's happening on stage, as much in conversation with the dancers as the dancers are with each other. But I am not sure this work knows what it wants to be—a darkly funny commentary on the jargon of the not for profit world, a look at the inner workings of ensemble process and the politics of groups, an ascerbic self reflection on the world of dance process, or an existential statement about heroism, causes and our hidden super powers.... it is at moments all of these, but by trying to be all of these, the strength of the message can get confusing. The first issue is the sound: despite the fact that the dancers are miked like music theatre performers, I could not hear quite a bit of the talking, and often missed the punch line of jokes.



Seven interesting and diverse dancers come together in a hinted at process with multiple rules to dedicate themselves to a cause, some cause, several causes, which range from everyone should breastfeed to we all need to combat climate change: they form a coalition they call the Think Tank in Search of Doing, which they shorten to TTISOD and pronounce Titty Sod. As they move through sessions they introduce themselves: Springster, (Michel Rodriguez Cintra) who ingested his dead pet frog and now can jump insanely high, The Big Liberjinski (Benjamin Wardell) who is committed to Beauty above all else, Sparky Lightstep (Meghann Wilkenson) who appears to be the facilitator of whatever process the group has embarked on, Rapid Glitch (Daniel Gibson), Shadow (Marc Macaranas) and my personal favorite MMM (Melinda Jean Myers) a new mom, sleep deprived, endlessly breastfeeding, who lies to the group that she can fly. They wear costume bits, like a Halloween grab bag, that indicate their heroic personae. Costume designer Jeff Hancock had his tongue in cheek creating this show.

In the “sessions” which define the sections of the evening, there are conflicts, worked out in duets surrounded by support circles of dancers lying around the two who have argued (would love to see this used in the Republican debates), there are monologues of exploration and discovery, there are bursts of dancing, there are repetitive movement phrases that are like katas. These unlikely heroes do not seem so much washed up, as the pre-show promo suggests, as they are ordinary people in search of that which is ultimately unique and powerful about themselves. Surrounded by technology and media and big screens constantly documenting their questions and conversations and process, I came to see the group as completely not Super, but instead as stand-ins for the search we all go on to find meaning. We all want to believe that heroism lies somewhere between the milk we need to remember to pick up and the laundry we need to do. We create narratives and meaning in our lives to make it bearable. We make ourselves super heroes because the grinding monotony of living is too tragic, the smallness of our actual lives so sad.

*Trip the Light Fantastic: The Making of SuperStrip* is perhaps so much, so many, that we don't see it all. The beauty of dance is often that in being wordless, it can say things that words cannot express. Trying hard to listen to this conversation got my head in the way of hearing with my heart. The evening is so entertaining that it's possible to avoid seeing how sad some of what the Titty Sod discovers is.

*Trip the Light Fantastic: The Making of SuperStrip* was commissioned by the Harris Theater for Music and Dance and the Pamela Crutchfield Dance Fund of the Imagine Campaign and showed for one night only on March 3 at the Harris Theatre at 205 E. Randolph in Chicago's Millennium Park. I hope we get to see this piece again!

For more information go to [www.HarrisTheaterChicago.org](http://www.HarrisTheaterChicago.org)

Or go to [www.luckyplush.com](http://www.luckyplush.com).

Photos by William Frederking.

[link](#)