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THEATER

BWW Reviews: Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance and SITI Present A RITE as Part of BAM's Next Wave Festival

October 11
11:07 2013

by [Kayt MacMaster](#)

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By its continuous nature, *Rite of Spring* has become an indicator of change over time. One hundred years after its riotous premiere at the Theatre des Champs-Elysees in Paris, it continues to hold a certain allure for performers, directors, and audiences alike. The collaborative work of [Igor Stravinsky](#), [Vaslav Nijinsky](#), and [Nicholas Roerich](#) has been reworked, remade, and analyzed time and time again. Most recently, the [Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company](#) and [Siti Company](#), a NYC-based theater troupe directed by [Anne Bogart](#), joined efforts to collaboratively create and produce a centenary interpretation of the prodigious work of Nijinsky,

and Roerich. The product of their efforts, entitled "A Rite," premiered on Thursday at the [Brooklyn Academy Of Music's](#) Howard Gilman Opera House as part of the Next Wave festival.

If the original *Rite of Spring* was a stone dropped into a calm and unsuspecting pool of water, then "A Rite" magnifies not only the ripples on the surface, but the speed and velocity with which the stone fell and the effect of its reverberations on bodies of water for a century. Weaving together particles of the original themes of sacrifice, primitivism, and community with the palpable recounts of a World War I veteran ([Will Bond](#)), poetry by Shuntaro Tanikawa, scholarly banter with musicologist Severine Neff ([Ellen Lauren](#)), and the considerations of time and existence by physicist [Brian Greene](#), "A Rite" traverses the lineage, some might even suggest the fulfilled prophecies, of *Rite of Spring* and infuses its folkloric roots with present-day confrontations. Movement and text are not used to establish another response to the score, but rather they are fashioned to examine the global situations surrounding Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring* over the last 100 years.

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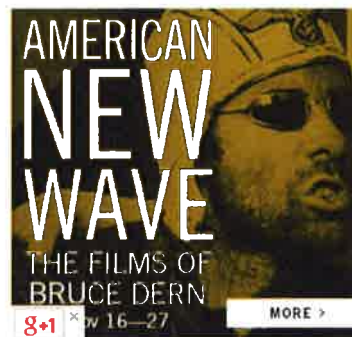
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The opening scene is post-apocalyptic. One uncovered light bulb dangles from a long cord in the middle of the stage. Solitude is disrupted as the entire ensemble rushes the stage. Dozing out an agitated flurry of gestures that take them down into the ground and up out of the floor, the end of the original musical score pounds the air and compels the dancers to dance to, what seems like it could be, their deaths. This flurry of gestures is a recurring theme throughout the piece. It causes a sense of closeness to destruction when it is least expected.

The music stealthily transitions back to chronological order, but it dips in and out of audible perception. Its presence, ultimately, is eminent even in imperceptibility. The libretto and the movement carry on the shapes of the music, drawing circles in space, pausing, contemplating, and fighting for lost hope. The performers sing the instrumentation in a soft, sweet, nostalgic tone. They clap, stomp, and holler. The music is pervasive. It haunts every theme and variation. It chooses the fate of each performer before they have even become aware of their role. Because of this, there is a deep, respectful understanding of the extrasensory supremacy of the music. It speaks, and everyone listens.

Amongst the chaos there is a constant return to simplicity. The simplest recurring movement motif is walking. It is directed into militant marching lines, whimsical traverses across space on floating platforms, and solo sojourns in caverns of recall. Walking is a reminder that while a riot, a battle, or a full-fledged war could be happening in one place; somewhere else life is continuing on unaffected.

"A Rite" is not just an overlapping of many talents on one stage. It is an overlapping of time, stories, and experiences to create an experience of life in sleeping bones. It is a reminder that in life we experience continuums and ultimatums, and sometimes these, too, overlap. This work is an indicator of the human tendency toward reminiscence, and it is an examination of the frailness of memories. "A Rite" physically embodies the space in between our experiences and our recall. It is a collection of one hundred years time, but the understanding is that time, if collected, is always reinterpreted.

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