

DanceTabs

Home News Galleries Reviews Interviews Features Archives

Bill T. Jones and SITI Company – A Rite, /Time:Study 1 – San Francisco

By Aimee Tsao on November 3, 2013 in Reviews · 1 Comments



Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company and SITI Company in *A Rite*.
© Paul B. Goode. (Click image for larger version)

About author



Aimee Tsao

Work for DanceTabs

Aimée Ts'ao, a San Francisco dance writer, has appeared in Dance Magazine, was dance critic for the Bay Area Reporter and was the senior ballet editor for the Dance Insider Online. She lets her previous incarnation as a professional dancer (ballet and modern) imbue her perspective and hopes you like the resulting flavour.

Share this article

Tweet this

Digg it

Add to Delicious

Share on Facebook

Stumble it

Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company

/Time:Study 1

San Francisco, CounterPulse
9 October 2013

Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company and SITI Company *A Rite*

San Francisco, Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, Lam Research Theater
11 October 2013

billtjones.org
counterpulse.org
www.ybca.org

The Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company is celebrating its thirtieth anniversary, and while in San Francisco invited us to the West Coast party. Jones/Zane presented */Time:Study 1*, a site-specific adaptation of Study/Time, for the smaller, more intimate space at CounterPulse. And at Yerba Buena Center of the Arts in the Lam Research Theater, for the centenary of Nijinsky's ballet, *Le Sacre du Printemps* (*The Rite of Spring*), to Stravinsky's score, Jones/Zane joined forces with the New York City-based SITI Company to perform *A Rite*, which is conceived, directed and choreographed by Artistic Director, Bill T. Jones, SITI Company Artistic Director, Ann Bogart and Jones/Zane Associate Artistic Director, Janet Wong.

CounterPulse has a history of nurturing emerging artists, so to see an internationally acclaimed company here is quite unusual. */Time: Study 1* is part of a series in which Jones explores his own take on John Cage's thoughts on indeterminacy and chance. There is nothing new in linking these ideas to dance as well as music, particularly in light of Merce Cunningham's use of Cage's theories for more than sixty years in his own oeuvre. The dancers are

Get Connected

RSS Feed

Twitter

Facebook

Flickr

DanceTabs Contributors

Regular contributors...

Aimee Tsao | Alan Helms | Dave Morgan |
Eric Taub | Foteini Christofilopoulou |
Graham Watts | Jane Simpson | Jann Parry |
Jarkko Lehmus | Jordan Beth Vincent |
Juliet Burnett | Kenneth Archer & Millicent Hodson |
Laura Cappelle | Lise Smith | Lynette Halewood |
Margaret Willis | Marina Harss | Natasha Rogai |
Oksana Khadarina | Paul Arrowsmith |
Bruce Marriott (Ed)

The above list is composed of those who have generally contributed in the last 6 months. Complete list of DanceTabs Contributors and more info

DanceTabs Tweets

the most astounding part of the hour-long piece (precisely measured by a giant digital clock center stage for half of the time). They deserve so much more than a list of clichéd adjectives. Powerful movers alighting soundlessly from soaring jumps, kinetic actors translating the idea of a whisper or a scream into a simple gesture – isn't that what dance should be, ideally?



Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company and SITI Company in *A Rite*.
© Paul B. Goode. (Click image for larger version)

Since the beginning of this year there have been many events celebrating the 100th anniversary of the premiere of Stravinsky's *Le Sacre de Printemps*. Even those who are familiar with the music, some even counting it as one of their favorite 20th century compositions, are not aware that it was commissioned by Diaghilev to accompany Nijinsky's choreography.

A Rite, in the hands of Jones, Bogart, and Wong, is the most startling and insightful version I have seen – ever. Instead of the score being used as the starting point for the choreography (in essence, just putting steps to the music), here the motivating idea is that both the original choreography and score sparked a riot at its Parisian premiere. What these three created is an exploration of the how and why it occurred, and what impact both the music and choreography had then and how they influenced the development of both arts until now. In short, it is an amazingly aesthetic lesson in history, culture, philosophy and almost any other topic you can think of, including physics. It weaves a variety of perspectives and artistic voices while grappling with past, present, and future. *A Rite* is certainly not the decoration on a cake, but the flour, water, and yeast that make a substantial loaf of bread.

It really isn't too surprising that the members of the two companies, nine dancers and six actors, should merge so seamlessly. Bogart's SITI Company members train in a physically demanding regimen of Suzuki method and Viewpoints, which are every bit as rigorous as the ballet and modern dance training that the Jones/Zane dancers are steeped in. Both actors and dancers understand that striving towards perfect physical techniques gives them the base and the structure to attain the freedom to discover the emotional voice as well.

All the elements in *A Rite* are like patches in a quilt, recurring in different places, at different times and with different frequencies, while contributing to the whole larger picture. The musical structure of the score is elucidated through several means. A woman (Ellen Lauren) in a navy blue middy dress spouts off in her sincere flat-voweled Midwest accent, explaining that

Dance Tabs
@DanceTabs

5h

REVIEW: @StuttgartBallet's Made in Germany @Sadlers_Wells. Jann Parry: dancetabs.com/2013/11/stuttg... Pic © Stuttgart Ballet pic.twitter.com/CFMmtUsYk2



Expand

Dance Tabs
@DanceTabs

9h

"My bouquet goes to the large model of a cow..." MT @naomip_86: Clement Crisp did not like Stuttgart's Made in Germany ft.com/cms/s/2/183611...

Show Summary

Dance Tabs
@DanceTabs

9h

Gorgeous indeed... RT @TalkingPointes: Gorgeous photos of costumes for Ratmansky's Cinderella @TheAusBallet fb.me/2U0Bi5wYq

Expand

Dance Tabs
@DanceTabs

20h

IfUMissed.. "Today I'd like to talk ...about responsibility & communication." Gulp. Jarkko Lehmus (@AmokBallet) blog: dancetabs.com/2013/11/jarkko...

Expand

Dance Tabs
@DanceTabs

21h

REVIEW: @FarrellBallet's all Balanchine Program B @kencen reviewed by Oksana Khadarina. Happy: dancetabs.com/2013/11/suzann... #ballet

Expand

Dance Tabs
@DanceTabs

19 Nov

IfUMissed... Touring until 5 Dec +ve REVIEW: @earthfall #ChelseaHotel reviewed by Jann Parry (@jdance9). dancetabs.com/2013/11/earthf...

Expand

Dance Tabs
@DanceTabs

19 Nov

Liang/ Maliphan/ Wheelon w Fang-Yi Sheu Yuan Yuan Tan @Sadlers_Wells reviewed by Jann Parry (@jdance9): dancetabs.com/2013/11/liang-...

Expand

Dance Tabs
@DanceTabs

19 Nov

REVIEW: @FarrellBallet's Prog B @kencen reviewed by Oksana Khadarina: dancetabs.com/2013/11/suzann... Pic © Linda Spillers: pic.twitter.com/JgBnfi3hX1



Expand

Dance Tabs

18 Nov

Stravinsky didn't compose the music in the finished order, and that the source of some of the motifs come from Lithuanian and Russian folk songs. This is all reflected in the structure of *A Rite* as well. The score is not played from beginning to end; only portions of it, on recordings by various orchestras, are used at any one time, and not in their usual order. The performers sing sections of the score in seven-part harmony and also clap the percussive line through other sections. Versatility by all performers is constantly on display. The actors have a lot of movement which is so skillfully made that you can't always tell them from the dancers.



Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company and SITi Company in *A Rite*.
© Paul B. Goode. (Click image for larger version)

Another important character is the soldier (Will Bond), who represents both the universal and the individual. Bond manages to move between the external and internal insanity of war, as well as show that even a traumatised fighter can still have remnants of sanity. At one point he decries people praising his sacrifice for his country and then remains the sole person standing as, ironically, everyone else dies around him.

One particularly evocative scene uses stools as the stepping stones of a moveable path that Akiko Aizawa walks on while reciting a Japanese poem. The performers move stools Bunraku-style from the rear of the path to the front so she can continue walking in whichever direction they lead her. In the beginning the stools rest on the floor, then they lift off the ground and rotate sideways so that her body is parallel to the stage (a bit Trisha Brown-like), then turn upright again, but elevated from the floor to give the illusion that she is walking on clouds.

Strangely the stools are also an element of the weakest scene – and this is first section I would cut if I had any editorial power. They form a straight line across the front of the stage, with actors and dancers perching on them while talking about a gamut of subjects. Almost everything they are saying has just been communicated by all the preceding action. Not only is it redundant, but it is also insulting to the audience, who surely have the ability to understand what they've just seen and felt, and don't need explanations that are given with the assumption that they, the viewers, are totally ignorant.

I am not sure how many more performances the two companies will be giving, but *A Rite* is certainly worth going out of your way to catch. *A Rite* @ The Modlin Center, Richmond, VA on Jan 23 – 24, 2014.

[Disclosure: In 1996, four members of Ann Bogart's SITi company were hired by a San Francisco playwright and director to perform in his own play, in which I had the leading role. In addition to working with them I also participated in the workshops they taught in Suzuki Method training for actors and Viewpoints. I am still friends with them, two of whom were in the cast of *A Rite*.]

Related Posts

Bill T. Jones – Ravel: Landscape or Portrait? and Story/
– New York
Hamburg Ballet – Nijinsky – San Francisco
Akram Khan Company – iTMOi – London
Smuin Ballet – Chants d'Auvergne, Petal, Jazzin' – San Francisco
SF Walking Distance Dance Festival – Kate Weare, Brian Brooks and others

[Twitter 8](#)[Facebook](#)[Print](#)[Email](#)[More](#)

Tags: /Time:Study 1, A Rite, Ann Bogart, Arnie Zane, Bill T. Jones, CounterPULSE, Ellen Lauren, Janet Wong, John Cage, Lam Research Theater, le Sacre du Printemps, Merce Cunningham, New York, Nijinsky, San Francisco, Serge Diaghilev, SITi Company, Stravinsky, Study/Time, The Rite of Spring, Will Bond, Yerba Buena Center for the Arts

[Previous Post](#)

**Royal Danish Ballet & School -
Come Fly Away, The Fable Maker -
Copenhagen**

[Next Post](#)

**American Ballet Theatre - Les
Sylphides, Clear, Theme and
Variations - New York**

Recommended for you



March 29, 2013

**Bill T. Jones – Ravel:
Landscape or
Portrait? and Story/
– New York**



February 18, 2013

**Hamburg Ballet –
Nijinsky – San
Francisco**



May 31, 2013

**Akram Khan
Company – iTMOi –
London**

1 comment on this post

[Submit yours](#)

**Mark
Freeman**
November 7,
2013

[Reply](#)

Aimee Tsao has once again hit the nail on the head, though on second thought that is a terrible metaphor for dancers. This was one of the all-time highpoints in dance, in my experience, along with growling pschedelically with Anna Halprin at Dance Workshop in the early 70s to seeing Maurice Béjart's all male circle dance to the radical Contraband in San Francisco in 80s San Francisco. Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane (and they are still inseparable, as Mr. Jones made very clear in his talk a few days before the performances) has fit into this top emotional and physical experience with almost everything they have done. And their Rite takes the cakewalk. There, a right metaphor!

Submit your comment

Your name

Your name is required

Your email

An email address is required

Website

Message

Submit comment

☐ Notify me of follow-up comments by email.

☐ Notify me of new posts by email.

DanceTabs

Search

Popular tags

London, The Royal Ballet, Sadler's Wells, New York, Royal Opera House, George Balanchine, New York City Ballet, Swan Lake, English National Ballet, Christopher Wheeldon, Frederick Ashton, American Ballet Theatre, Giselle, Alexei Ratmansky, Kenneth MacMillan, San Francisco, San Francisco Ballet, Romeo and Juliet, Wayne McGregor, Tchaikovsky, Coliseum, Bolshoi Ballet, Don Quixote, Tamara Rojo, Paris Opera Ballet, The Nutcracker, Pina Bausch, Mariinsky Ballet, The Sleeping Beauty, Jerome Robbins

Boston
London
Los Angeles
New York
San Francisco
Sydney
Washington

Tags
Archives
Site Map
Contact Us

DanceTabs © 2013 All Rights Reserved

© All here is copyright DanceTabs and the author concerned. Do not steal our words or pictures please. Thank you.