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bobrauschenbergamerica

SITI Company at Dance Theater Workshop

Reviewed by Mitch Montgomery

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PHOTO CREDIT
Michael Bosilow

In America, there are multitudes of regional or racial backgrounds, but everyone shares certain experiences. We all fall in love, for instance; a kind of love we feel is wholly unique to our experience, but really it's the exact same love that everyone else feels. The reality is that our lives and experiences are a collection of American gewgaws, readily available second hand at any yard sale across the country. But carefully collaged, as in the peppy revival of director Anne Bogart's "bobrauschenbergamerica," the snippets of our typical lives suddenly take on a pleasing kind of nostalgic substance.

Touring since 2001, playwright Charles L. Mee's kaleidoscopic homage to Robert Rauschenberg isn't a proper biography of the artist, famous for his nimble combining of found materials, but rather a theatrical application of his *modus operandi*. Though a character called Bob's Mom, played with homespun pleasantness by Kelly Maurer, occasionally offers insights into the life of her artist son, the piece mostly presents the archetypes of current Americans as they navigate relationships, attend barbeques, and dance the Electric Slide. What emerges, with much help from Bogart's rich staging, is an exuberant but absurd firecracker of contemporary life, in which hilarious diversions like the climatic arrival of a homicidal pizza boy (played by an understated Gian Murray Gianino) or the making of a martini Slip 'n' Slide can also say something about the quaint peculiarities and excesses of our culture.

The giant flag of a set, designed by James Schuette, is given much variety by Brian H Scott's multifaceted lighting design, which separately illuminates each star and stripe. Bogart's command of stagecraft is inarguable, particularly potent during a sequence in which a pair of reunited lovers, played spiritedly throughout by Samuel Stricklen and Ellen Lauren, is showered

in falling ping-pong balls.

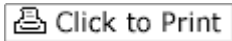
Presented by SITI Company at Dance Theater Workshop, 219 W. 19th St., NYC. April 23–May 16. Tue.–Sat., 7:30 p.m.; Sun., 1:30 and 5:30 p.m. (No performance Sun., May 16, 5:30 p.m.) (212) 924-0077 or www.siti.org.

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