



Dance Performance Reviews

Momix's Opus Cactus

**A review by Robert Abrams
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Joyce Theater: www.joyce.org or 212-242-0800

Momix: www.momix.com

Momix's Opus Cactus, a two act dance performance, was presented at the Joyce Theater. The show was conceived and directed by Moses Pendleton.

Opus Cactus was primarily percussive in nature. Momix's inventiveness rises to the level of The Lion King and The Muppets. Some of the human abstraction and representation of animal movement was reminiscent of The Lion King.

Momix's inventiveness, for the dance critic, is a trap. One could endlessly describe the wondrous scenes, and thereby neglect Momix's technical precision. Not to mention thereby violate people's oft-common Stanislavskiist urges to not be told what is coming next.

Momix has mastered stillness as well as rapid movement. To their choreographic credit, they manage to weave both in the same dance. As a general rule, they know that a dance has an appropriate length, and that sometimes that appropriate length is short. There were a couple of pieces I thought were too long, but that may have been my press

hat thinking to itself that there is so much good stuff here, if they don't get to the intermission soon, I'll have too much to write about.

Momix made extensive use of assisted dance disciplines. The short pole vault pole. The dolly (which at times doubled as a sit-and-spin). The swing-hammock. The low trapeze. Not to mention the mobius rolling jack (Momix apparently calls it a teardrop, but this name doesn't do it justice). Dancers, through their training and imagination, extend the capability of the human body, and this often times is where it is left, with the exception of a good pair of shoes. But a mechanical prosthesis can extend the capability of the human body. This is as true in dance as it is in martial arts and bicycling. But a mechanical assist can impede as well as raise up, especially if the device is employed blindly. Just as in martial arts you are sometimes better off throwing away the sword, in dance you sometimes need to throw away the pole and return to earth. Like a lizard.

Which brings me to the cultural references. There is one moment where the dancer undulates on the ground in the traditional movement found in Mexican folk dance. The dancers in Cactus Opus often, but not always, emulate the movements of the desert, thus providing a strong kinetic as well as visual them to tie the show together across its long and varied length (just like a desert is long and varied, come to think of it). But not so devoted to the theme that it might have become predictable. They could have constructed a show in which the audience says, if the previous number was about tumbleweeds, and this number is about lizards, then the next number must be about iguanas. But they didn't, which is just as well.

The show blurred the boundaries of gymnastics and dance. To fly, to spin, and to move slowly with grace. The only thing the dancers didn't do was make noise - although they emoted along to the outbursts in the music at several key points, but they didn't need to make noise because the audience made enough noise to shake the house when the show was over. The dancers, not content with merely having given an outstanding performance of demanding

choreography, responded by giving their bows as danced art, relaxed with with the odd flourish in parallel to the movement of the show itself.

There were maybe two or three seats that were empty. If you weren't in one of those empty seats tonight, you should be next time.

Photos of Momix's Opus Cactus courtesy of Momix



