



Obstructed Views

Palo Zustiak's "Blind Spot" slowly reveals relationships in a world of bizarre circumstances.

By [KELLY HAYES](#)
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The theater is engulfed in fog. Downstage left is a chair and in front of the chair, a small red velvet box over which a microphone is suspended. Is the music coming from that small box?

The dancer enters, picks up the box and removes two hearing aids, which when inserted in his ears cause the music to stop. In silence, the dancer disappears into the fog.

"Blind Spot" from Palo Zustiak's palissimo is a string of intriguing images demonstrating what we see and choose not to see.

Seeming non-sequitur is okay in this world where bizarre circumstances illuminate the essence of relationships.

As the fog lifts, more obstacles toward seeing the whole picture are revealed. We see Gina Bashour in a mirror before we actually see her in person. Alberto Denis is standing completely still in an upstage corner. Is he really there or just a reflection? A transparent plastic wall hanging stage right is used for fast entrances and exits. Figures can be seen standing momentarily on the other side of the wall, then they are gone.

About fifteen minutes into the piece, it is revealed that Ashleigh Leite has been wrapped in plastic against the stage left wall since the beginning of the show. She rolls out of the plastic with an unfocused burst of physical energy. Looking like a disoriented doll with bleach-blonde hair, she quickly changes direction and pauses, nervously shaking her head. This energy begins to calm down only when Bashour slaps her hand over Leite's mouth and manipulates her into another role.

The manipulation of others and building of obstacles appear to be the only understood ways of interaction in this world. But slowly, these blocks and patterns are recognized and begin to break down.

The characters have changed by the end of the 70-minute piece. Power roles have been played out. A duet between Bashour and Yoel Cassell which was full of conflict returns with a little more tenderness and care. The "disoriented doll" loses her blonde wig and white dress, tears down the plastic wall. She reveals a written reminder to live deliberately and love the people in our lives. Even this is qualified by the final statement — "I don't even know if or when he'll get this message."

The minimal sound design, also by Palo Zustiak, was accented by live sound from the performers. Bodies slapping against the plastic wall, the two women accompanying a solo by blowing across the tops of half-full beer bottles, the sound of chalk on a brick wall, and the deep breathing sound of an otherwise silent accordion added to the full experience of Blind Spot.

I missed much of the video in the beginning of the show because there was so much to look at in the vast space. However, I liked moments when the video and movement were fully integrated. A performer's writing gesture along the back wall was followed by a blue line that expanded as he walked away. Later, a crosshatched projection became a horizontal surface for a duet.

I appreciate the attention to detail in the creation of "Blind Spot." Recognizable relationships were portrayed through images, sounds, and movement with visceral impact. More importantly to me as an audience member, I had a pure emotional experience without feeling manipulated. The performance was not designed to engineer a specific response. The string of abstracted images and situations allowed each audience member to come to the work with his or her own experience and leave with something relative to that experience.

BLIND SPOT

Choreography by: Palo Zustiak.
Directed by: Palo Zustiak.
Dancers: Gina Bashour, Ashleigh Leite, Alberto Denis, and Yoel Cassell.
Music by: Y. Tiersen, S. Pompouguac, Taizé.
Sound design by: Palo Zustiak.
Dramaturgy by Rachel Chavkin, Light Design by Joe Doran, Visuals and Photography by José Aragon, Video Editing by Nectarios Leonidas, Voice by Jeffrey Frace

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