

dance ●●●

## Dancing What Is, What Was, and What Would Be, and All the Shimmering Spaces Between **Rendezvous With Nimble Ghosts**

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Dance lends itself to hallucination and dream. In front of us are striving, sweating bodies, but beyond what they actually do lies another, more enigmatic kind of "doing." In *Blind Spot*, the New York-based Slovakian choreographer Palo Zustiak shifts between seeing and the unseen, listening and the unheard, reality and ideal.

Smoke and mirrors mold a striking atmosphere. Zustiak uses walls, glass doors, and reflecting surfaces—wheeled into new positions—to alter our perspective of Chashama's black-box space. A performer in his palissimo presses his face against a curtain of semi-transparent plastic, and, behind it, a blurry double leans toward him. Joe Doran's lighting creates both clarity and enigma. At one point, the four performers rush about in darkness between pinpoint pools of light. José Aragón's slides and video images of enigmatic textures sometimes appear on the back wall. Ocean waves crawl up the wall at the end; maybe that's what we've been seeing all along.

Listening's a mystery too. Yoel Cassell enters to a blast of song in Zustiak's often menacing sound design. Ceremoniously, he takes hearing aids from a small red box and puts them on; instantly the music cuts out. Later Alberto Denis lies down and Cassell swings a mic over Denis's head, straining, as we do, to catch the ebb and flow of mystified words. Denis thrusts his throat against a mic as if to broadcast his pulse.

Zustiak studied in Amsterdam with such new-dance explorers as Susan Rethorst, David Zambrano, and Katie Duck. His approach to movement is weighted, sensual, and loose-limbed. But fierce. The dancing in this piece, whether it comes out of confrontations or inner compulsion, is about behavior and how feelings affect the body. Ashley Leite, wearing a tight, skimpy white dress and a disheveled blond wig, hurries about as stiff as a doll, groveling, twisting her limbs, tossing herself into falls. (Leite first appears when Gina Bashour unrolls her from a bundle of black plastic that's been lying unnoticed against a wall.) Cassell undergoes a solo as if it were an unstoppable tantrum.

In this shadowy world, people fight and embrace, lift a partner, yell silently, curse one another out. Other more surreal activities include hooting into beer bottles, making an accordion "breathe" and getting oxygen from a mask attached to it, and hurling an array of shoes at the curtain. Although some activities seem disconnected from the work's core, *Blind Spot* casts a potent spell.