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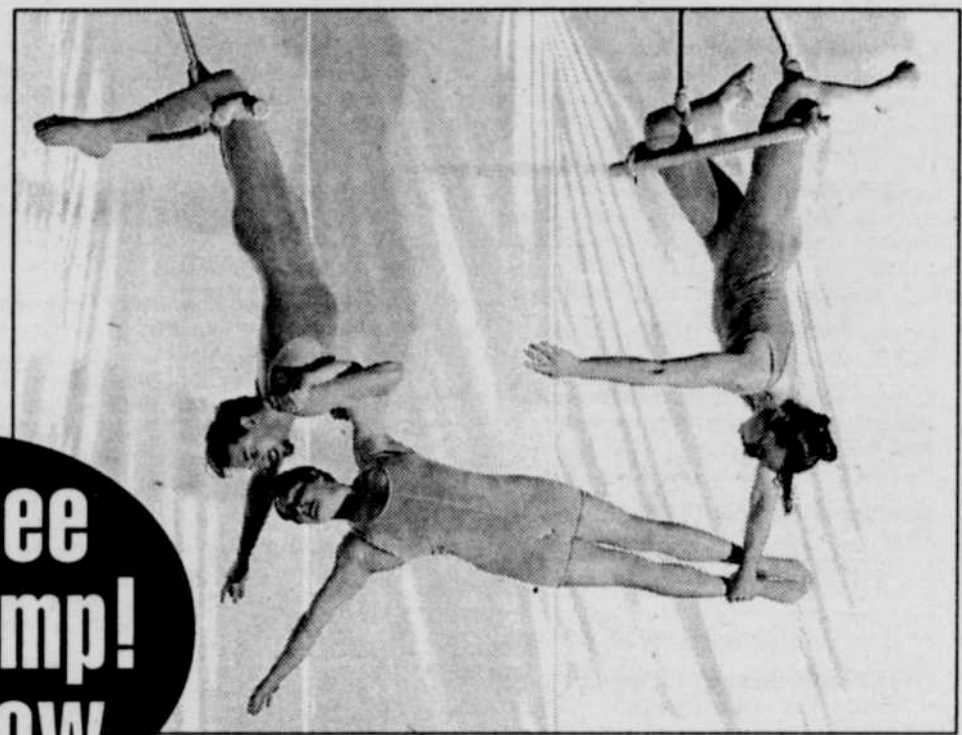
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DANCE

Don't try this at home: Do Jump! presents NOW! through Dec. 29



Do see
Do Jump!
... now

Robin Lane creates another extremely physical winner

BY FLOYD SKLAVER

Two men dance separately on stage. Delicately they lift and twirl their partners, fabric billowing and floating through the air like kites. But these men are not dancing with women; in fact, they aren't even dancing with humans. Their partners are tuxedo jackets removed only moments before.

This arresting image is one of many in the Do Jump! production of NOW!, which returns to Echo Theatre weekends through Dec. 29. The eight-member company is in its 25th year of providing a provocative blend of dance, acrobatics, aerial movement, humor and original music, and NOW! (originally presented in June) is a visually stunning continuation of that work.

Do Jump! is led by its founder, Robin Lane, a lesbian who has been dancing her entire life. Among her earliest influences was Alwin Nikolai, whose dance company was famous in the 1970s for improvisation, fascinating visuals and mysterious sounds. Lane also admired the way Nikolaj's dances conveyed human emotions despite their abstract forms.

This latest production is a personal work for the choreographer, who says she wanted "to make a show about how our culture is always striving madly for something we don't have," how the speed we move "in this horrible rat race to nowhere" affects our well-being and our relationships. "I wanted to do a show where the audience had a visceral experience to that feeling," she explains. "What would rest feel like? What would movement feel like?"

Lane points out that "life is always shifting and transitioning; the beginning or the end is always moving." Likewise, Do Jump! performances are always changing, too.

"The show will continue to grow until after about 100 performances," she notes, because so much of it is based on improvisation. "Otherwise it's like a writer only sending a first draft out."

Lane began working on NOW! five years before even moving into rehearsals. In her head, she sees that it "starts this way and ends this way, and these are the skills we need to get this idea across."

But until she's in the studio with the cast "creating the vocabulary," she doesn't know exactly what a dance will look like. An individual piece, such as the one titled "A Walk

Around the Block," may take as long as two years of nurturing and experimenting.

"I tell them: 'Here is an idea, here's a context, these are the confines for it. Together we create the movement.'"

For improvisation like this to succeed requires exceptional skill, coordination and trust. Do Jump! performs more than 300 shows a year, including school performances and corporate events. Some members were originally students in the movement and acrobatics classes taught by Lane and her associates; others have been with Do Jump! for more than 10 years.

This level of experience enhances the company's ability to create new work together. "It's about precision and also performing," says Lane.

This precision is particularly evident in "Line Dance," a piece where duos, trios and quartets of bodies intermingle—mixing and morphing into cohesive units that then move apart (as do our own relationships). As each new body enters, it fits itself into the shape of the existing form like human jigsaw puzzle pieces. The effect is riveting.

Do Jump! calls itself "Extremely Physical Theatre," and it certainly is—extremely physical and extremely dangerous. At the opening of the show, a dancer gracefully ascends to the ceiling of the auditorium, then proceeds with the aid of some exposed piping to move over the audience's heads before disappearing into the ceiling.

The show also uses circus imagery for emotional effects, as when two women hold each other lovingly on a trapeze. Although not specifically intended to be homoerotic, Lane favors images that are a "nonfixed view of what anyone can be."

In her world, it's "very natural that the women are just as strong as the men...and there is no fixed view of who lifts who, who's tender with whom. It's intentional that things are reciprocal," she continues, "so that when there's a duet on the floor it's not the person who holds and the other who is held; it goes back and forth. I think it's a powerful image that the women just grab the men in the air."

When the company performed in New York City last year, *Newsday* compared the show to Cirque du Soleil "except utterly lacking in pretension." *The New York Times* called it "highly creative," exclaiming that Do Jump! "furnishes fun in profusion."

Portland audiences should not miss this opportunity to see the latest work by this highly inventive, highly lauded company. []

DO JUMP! EXTREMELY PHYSICAL THEATRE performs NOW! at 7:30 p.m. Thursdays through Saturdays and 3 p.m. Sundays through Dec. 29 at Echo Theatre, 1515 S.E. 37th Ave. Tickets are \$15-\$20 from Fastixx.



Robin Lane leads Do Jump! into its 25th year