

Austin American Statesman

DANCE

Pop dancing beyond Ricky and Britney.

By **Jeanne Claire van Ryzin**

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Nonstop kineticism. Sharp urban edges. Refreshing choreography. Los Angeles-based UT dance department alum Kitty McNamee and her Hysterica Dance Company closed a three-performance run Saturday night of her “Sticks and Stones,” a pop-influenced evening-length show at the Helm Fine Arts Center.

While at times the full ensemble work veered too closely to the commercial stylings of bump-and-grind pop concert dancing (a couple of the dancers have backed up the likes of Britney Spears and Ricky Martin), “Stick and Stones” was a bracing, invigorating work.

That’s because McNamee steers clear of the overused stylings of classic modern dance. Instead, to the sounds of bands like Fischerspooner and The Smiths as well as contemporary composition, McNamee employed her energetic and psychologically engaged movement vocabulary. Wrists, elbows and ankles created surprising angles.

At other moments, legs stiffened as dancers shuffled across the stage. Hands fluttered constantly and hips wiggled on the downbeat.

The dancers didn’t sweep across the stage with the usual deliberate series of low leaps; instead they pranced, knees springing sharply up.

“Sticks and Stones” was a rare occasion—new modern dance that actually felt new.