

# Los Angeles Times

MONDAY, JULY 26, 2004 E5

## DANCE REVIEW

# A powerful fusion of bodies, identities

By LEWIS SEGAL  
*Times Staff Writer*

Voluminous yet revealing, contemporary yet full of references to a glamorous past, Ryan Heffington's costumes for "Victorious" fine-tune the art of assemblage with spectacular dexterity. Moreover, their ability to align all sorts of influences provides a key to the work itself: a new two-act dance-drama piled high with thematic concepts and movement styles but no linear plot.

Choreographer Kitty McNamee has brought to the Open Fist Theatre in Hollywood not only her formidably versatile Hysterica Dance Company but also an ability to make the clash of idioms yield insights about human relationships.

Reviewed Saturday, the work initially focuses on three couples: Tara Nicole Hughes and Scott Hislop (impossibly gorgeous, hopelessly screwed up); Nina McNeely and Heffington (seriously playful); and Mecca Andrews and Lisa K. Lock (intensely confrontational).

Hughes and Hislop start out trying — and failing — to uphold some sort of innate or inherited rigidity, their spines continually caving in under the pressure, their fragments of ballet steps and poses looking like shattered architecture in a ruined landscape. They love each other, but that's not enough — not until interaction with the others (especially Andrews-Lock) helps them inhabit their bodies more authentically.

Meanwhile, McNeely and Heffington graze contentedly on each other — and whatever's out there to be experienced or tasted (People feeding each other becomes one of the major pantomime motifs of the piece). They're arguably the least interesting duo because they live completely without struggle, ruled by impulse.

Andrews and Lock, however, take every move and feeling as far as it can go, forging a bond that's deeper than sex and seems headed toward some powerful fusion of their bodies and identities. They become the visionary teachers of "Victorious," and maybe more: Andrews' costume suggests the amalgamation of African mother-goddess and Folies Bergere showgirl, spirit and flesh at their zeniths.

Press materials interpret "Victorious" as a study of neo-Victorian repression (Hughes-Hislop) versus organic, instinctual openness (Andrews-Lock), and that's the easiest way to look at it. However, the house program offered no such reduction of McNamee's overlapping and converging complexities, merely a poem by William Butler Yeats about freeing oneself from the cloak of "old mythologies" and instead "walking naked."

However you fit its pieces together, "Victorious" offers an exciting, distinctive dance-theater experience, fueled by propulsive taped jazz and rock (including new contributions from Anna Clyne and Mount Sims). If living fiercely is its prescription for ultimate fulfillment, dancing fiercely is certainly its most sustained pleasure.

## Hysterica Dance Company

Where: Open Fist Theatre, 1625 N. La Brea Ave., Hollywood

When: 8 p.m. Thursday through Saturday

Price: \$20

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