

## DANCE REVIEW

# Raw, fragmented and just like L.A.

Hysterica Dance Company's 'rapture' pieces are disjointed, often with no beginning or end.

By LEWIS SEGAL  
Times Staff Writer

Kitty McNamee's choreography for her locally based Hysterica Dance Company has always stressed the violence, alienation and eroticism of contemporary life. But in the short pieces that make up her five-part suite titled "rapture," she embraces disorder in a new way, refusing to obey the rules that define well-made dances.

At the Open Fist Theatre in Hollywood on Sunday, her works didn't often have a beginning, middle and an end — or an evolving movement vocabulary. Instead, they came at you in waves or bursts of action, like random, disjointed acts glimpsed from a moving vehicle. Very raw, very fragmentary, very L.A.

In "Careless Whisper," for instance, you're in a crowded club watching partnerships form and dissolve on the dance floor to music by Wham! Suddenly Aaron Cash and Scott Hislop begin competing for one woman after another and are soon facing off in hostile confrontations.

But this isn't a dance-drama, just an anecdote — maybe the memory of an incident that invaded your consciousness at some point and has no consequences or payoff, unless you count the brief, intimate "Reprise" duet (to a Dolly Parton record) for Cash and Justine Clark later in the evening.

The group pieces "Reflex" and "Aphlex" bracket the suite, sharing the same Apex Twin musicianship, the same Sir Heffington costumes and the same slash-and-skim-across-the-space style of choreography. McNamee again assigns solo shadow-boxing moves to her men (Ryan Heffington and Marlon Pelayo), and though you might consider "Aphlex" an expansion of "Reflex," it also features additional movement ideas that are deliberately left undeveloped.

In "Eulaila 3," Clark, Tara Avise and Nina McNeely wear baby-doll dresses as they stag-



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**RANDOM:** *Hysterica Dance Company performing in the five-part "rapture" suite.*

ger and collapse while Parton sings about a doomed little sparrow. That's all: Just a statement about vulnerability, and then it's gone. Only the quintet "Refugee" (to Mahler) offers a conventional movement structure, and if you're looking for conceptual unity, you'd better focus on the sense of struggle common to most parts of "rapture" — that and McNamee's commitment to intensely purposeful, technically sophisticated performances.

After intermission, McNamee supplements her own short pieces with others created by dancers in her company. And here Heffington earns pride of place with costume designs that brilliantly implement his choreographic concepts.

In "Sunken Treasures" (to music by Mount Sims), he puts five broken, despairing women into showgirl costumes — glittery bikini outlines over nude-look net — and you've

never seen movement like this performed by dancers dressed like that. Yes, even showgirls get the blues, but all the glitz, and the fake hair, make their distress all the more poignant.

Heffington's parodistic "Dripping on the Thunder" (to Gang Gang Dance) glories in its garish showbiz-ethnic drag: McNeely a scarlet, tasseled Pocahontas, Pelayo an islander in fake tattoos and Heffington a quasi-Indonesian wild man, all of them deliriously performing preposterous mystic rites.

Choreographed and costumed by McNeely and Mecca Vazie, "Shifts in Obscure Ideologies" (music by Liliput) finds three women and two men forever reaching for something just overhead but unattainable, something that might make a difference.

McNamee's own "Experiment in Ecstasy" (to music by Anna Clyne) explores emotions expressed — mostly by Hislop — and those forcibly suppressed by McNeely, Pelayo and Emily Williams.

At the end of this intriguing, elliptical program, McNamee provides a big switch in attack: a lyric love duet titled "Carry (You and Me)" for Hislop and Tara Nicole Hughes, 7½ months pregnant and wearing nothing to disguise that fact.

McNamee is also well on her way toward motherhood, so this absolutely conventional, life-affirming finale (music by Cat Power) can be seen as autobiographical: an artist free of the struggles that she unerringly depicts now basking in the happiest of expectations.

## Hysterica Dance Company

**Where:** Open Fist Theatre, 6209 Santa Monica Blvd., Hollywood

**When:** 8 p.m. Friday through Sunday

**Price:** \$20

**Contact:** (323) 882-6912 or [www.openfist.org](http://www.openfist.org)