

## PRESENT Magazine

### Jutting and Swerving: A Deep Breath of Fresh Air

#### Contemporary Dance

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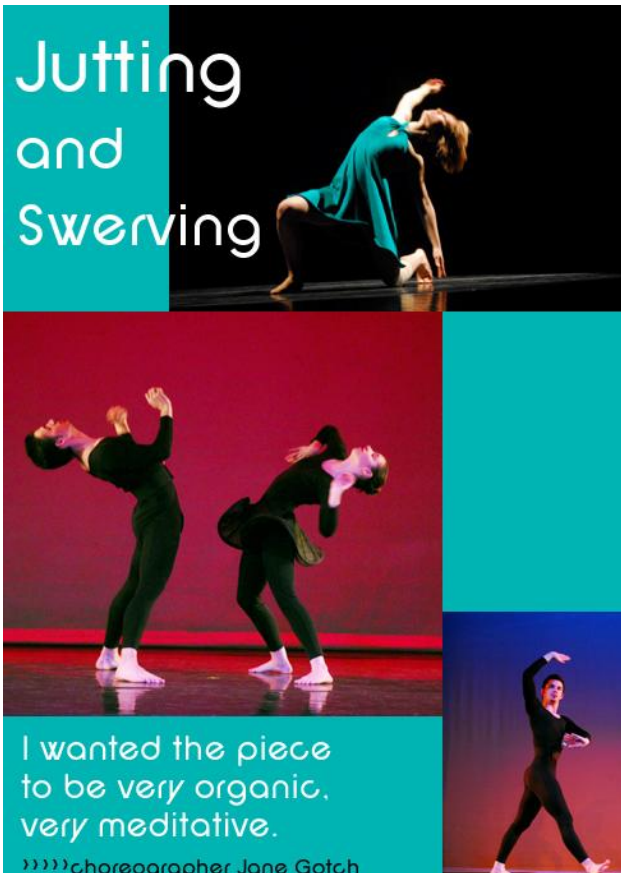
*Story by Rachel C. Murphy.*



Anyone who thinks that modern dance is all about feeling the music and free movement has never seen a rehearsal of one of Kansas City's up and coming modern dance companies. It's silent in the hard white building La Esquina, except for the rhythmic counting of choreographer Jane Gotch. Nothing but "5, 6, 7, 8" echoes, interspersed with the footfalls of Gotch and her two dancers as they rehearse the Urban Culture Project's offering, *Jutting and Swerving*.

*Jutting and Swerving* is presented by the Urban Culture Project and supported by Charlotte Street Foundation, ArtsKC Fund, and Kansas City Young Audiences. Performances are May 1 and 2, 2009 at 7:30 PM at La Esquina, 1000 West 25th Street off of Southwest Blvd.

The evening includes a new work from Gotch entitled "Still Within" and "We are A Coda", from choreographer Tiffany Sisemore. Far from resembling anything with tutus, this collaborative work involves not only dancers from several respected companies, but costume design by KCAI fiber artist Tasha Rose-Murphy, and sound design from Randy



Skach, Toph McNeil, and Terrence Moore.

Sitting in on one of Gotch's rehearsals is a strangely meditative experience. Even with the day before jitters and last-minute count reinforcements, the overall tone of the piece subdues any anxiety that the performers are really feeling. Gotch's choreography goes beyond the jerky movements so often associated with recent choreographers and invokes the breath of the musicians as well as the staccato internal rhythms of the music. In a piece called "jutting and swerving," many of the movements are surprisingly round, undulating into themselves only to thrust themselves out to do it again.

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»»»»choreographer Jane Gotch

"I wanted the piece to be very organic, very meditative," Gotch says. "I'm not interested in the superhuman, the ten pirouettes and legs up by your ears. That's not interesting to me. I'd rather see how the music interlays with the movement. It's more like a visual, like a painting."

Using music from The Clogs, Zoe Keating, Four Tet, and The Notwist, Gotch's piece uses not only the physical prowess of her dancers, but Mica Thomas' beautifully stark lighting design that incorporates shadow as an element so strongly that it increases the feeling of the company. As four dancers move along the back wall of the performance space, their Peter Pan selves multiply to fill the stage with reminders of movement, breathing with the music.

If Gotch's piece is swerving, then Sisemore's "We Are Now a Coda" is jutting. Using music from the Animal Collective and incorporating a video installation from Chicago friend and colleague Daniel Colman, Sisemore's non-narrative piece explores a much more frenetic pace of movement. Her dyed silk tunics mimic the color panels in the video installation and her dancers embody the jangling energy of Animal Collective's early work.

Sisemore is interested in non-traditional movement and uses that feeling in her work. "I think what is funded in Kansas City tends to be very conservative. I think it's much easier and more accessible if you have more of a ballet base and go from there." Sisemore cites the success of several of contemporary dance companies that sprang from the ranks of the Kansas City Ballet.

"I think that when you're doing something that is more unusual that isn't as recognizable as a vocabulary that people are used to seeing, it's more difficult for people to grab that and hold on to it. Because of that, very few people have really reached deep and delved in to explore that. That's really what we're trying to do, to go further away from that contemporary ballet and really explore what we consider to be more true modern dance, and what is happening now, in other cities," Sisemore says.

This current sensibility of choreography is bringing modern dance to the forefront in Kansas City, displaying work that is not only interesting, but accessible in the sense of bringing the dancer to the audience. Far from just being about physical ability, the kind that mere mortals can only dream of, Gotch and Sisemore harness the deep breath and excited energy that makes their movement something that makes the audience want to move with them. Don't be surprised if you see that audience breathing with the dancers as these two promising choreographers take the stage May 1-2.