

Oct. 25, 2010

‘See-Saw’: Well-balanced

by Greta Moore

The Charlotte Street Foundation hosted “See-Saw,” an installation-based performance created by composer Mark Southerland and choreographer Jane Gotch.

Both performers are UMKC alumni. There is a final performance this Monday night at La Esquina, at 1000 W. 25th St.

“I would say that we based it off mirror neurons in our brains,” Gotch said. “We are hard-wired to have empathetic responses toward other people and animals on the planet. That’s our nature. We feel that performers utilize mirror neurons in performance to elicit an empathetic response from the audience.”

“So now that we know about this consciously,” Gotch said. “We wanted to bring this into performance in a non-soap opera after-school special sort of way, like as a tear-jerker, but how we could really create through experiences physical empathetic responses to what they are saying.”

The show also featured co-collaborators Shay Estes, Tuesday Faust, Shawn Hansen, Mike Stover and Matt Tady. There was also a special appearance by Peregrine Honig, third-place winner from the Bravo reality show “Work of Art.”

“The whole show deals with memories and how our memories shape the things we do, the art we make and the music we make,” Stover said. “It’s a conceptual piece so you can take what you will. I like the look on people’s faces when things happen.”

To explore the themes of memories and empathy, the artists employed a number of tools that seemed to also express vulnerability.

To do this, they used mirrored dancing, music, baby goats and an amazing double saxophone solo by Southerland.

“I’m sort of scared of dying playing two saxes,” Southerland said. “At least the most famous person did. A lot of the stories tonight have been learning to do something and

then that going awry in some kind of way. Obviously we told that in a strange way. There are baby goats around.”

The baby goats were a delight to watch for the audience.

“We wanted a bunch of babies to come out, but the mom’s wouldn’t let them out this late,” Gotch said. “So we thought, ‘Let’s get baby goats.’ I think it works really well. W.C. Fields said never put an animal or a baby on stage because they will steal the show, and that’s kind of what we wanted.”

The memories expressed were personal to the performers and showed how they developed their talents.

“This ‘Magic Moment’ was a show I did when I was 14,” Gotch said. “I had to dance to the song in this big arena. Then I had to pick up the bull head and walk around the whole arena with it. It was one of those moments where you have to do it. You almost have to disassociate from your body because you hate what you have to do so much, but how that made me a stronger performer.”

The music was a mixture of unique and different styles and even some famous songs.

“I do a lot of more traditional music, so it was nice to play just songs, and some atmospheric music as a reaction to the dancers,” Stover said. “It was all over the map.”

The audience enjoyed the performance and found it gave them much to think about.

“I thought it was really beautiful,” UMKC alumna Lydia Friz said. “A little inscrutable at times, hard-to-read, but then there were very clear moments. I liked how there were different things going on. It sort of played with your mind and encouraged interaction.”