

SHOW BUSINESS WEEKLY

DANCE

TERRAIN

The Kitchen
April 27, 2002

Review by Sophia Ernst

Wide ranging, generous movements and raw physicality mark Rebecca Lazier's absorbing dances, courageously danced by her company, Terrain, in *Uncharted Dances*, the company's New York debut at The Kitchen.

Lazier's bold movement vocabulary, with its appealing combination of no-holds-barred turns and dives to the floor and the surprising moments of quiet in torqued shoulder stands and still, hawk-like hovering is articulated fully by her seven dancers, who throw themselves into every off-kilter balance and tangled embrace with an abandon that is truly astonishing.

Vanish opens the door into Lazier's choreographic realm, defining her vocabulary of movement with its gutsy sweeps of arms and legs and its space-eating leaps and dives. Set to a live performance of Schoenberg's *String Trio Opus 45*, six dancers in black begin to move with rippling legs and arms, leaving one dancer motionless. This interplay between the individual and the group continues throughout *Vanish* and sometimes takes on the migratory group dynamic of a flock of birds. Indeed, bird imagery hovered throughout the movement vocabulary of *Vanish*, in the broken-winged arms of the dancers, which took on the appearance of newly hatched chicks' wings at one point. A kaleidoscope of charged movement, *Vanish* lives up to its name, with the dancers silhouetted against the vanishing light, their arms reaching for the sky.

Falling Awake, a dream-like quartet whose intention is to explore how "people change when they go from being alone into the awkward state of 'coupledom,'" is a bit confusing, although danced with the same generosity as *Vanish*. Three women and one man in white alternate between wide sweeps of movement and meditative, emotional pacing that takes on cryptic overtones in the long, searching looks between the dancers. Shifting relationships between the dancers contrast, once again, with the individual to convey a certain amount of tension, but the connections remain vague, resulting more in an atmosphere of missed connections. *Cria Merchant's* delicate, yet assertive dancing was particularly beautiful.

A Stone's Throw is a sometimes lyrical, sometimes wild journey through various cycles of love-holding back, giving in and letting go. Set to live music by Jody Elff, three dancers, Daryl Owens, Jennifer Lafferty and Christopher Williams fill *A Stone's Throw* with a kind of glowing vibrancy that alternates between pathos and exuberance. In simple dresses for the women and pants for Williams the trio could be made up of anyone, so universal seem their experiences of embrace, confusion, rejection and moving on. Elff's repetitive, droning score with its emphasis on three recurring notes underscores the sense that these are universal experiences.

This, a world premiere, is a spoken word solo for Lazier in which she takes us on a guided tour of her body. Starting with her pulsing feet, we learn that "when my feet do this, they're holding on for dear life," and on upwards, through her knees, hips, back, shoulders, and her elbows, which like "to reveal and conceal." Another relationship to her body is revealed amid headstands and hovers. "I would like to wake up as someone else," Lazier informs us, and this someone else's body would be pain-free, so that she wouldn't recognize this body as herself. Then, facing the audience, Lazier reveals, "This is what I look like on the inside."

Nurses, another world premiere, exhibits Lazier's devilish wit. Beginning with a mournful air, a dancer enters the blue-lit stage in her underwear and proceeds to don what can only be described as fat suit lingerie—a humongous stuffed bra and panties that are equipped with an impressive rear end and a formidable tummy. Over this goes a nurses' shift, and here's where the fun begins: five similarly clad matrons enact a wild, perverse escapade that explores not only female roles and the female body, but abusive relationships as well. First the ladies become a kind of freakish football team, "hutting" to each other as they intone questions from various questionnaires, including the Meyers Briggs Personality Test and the AA Questionnaire. One of the nurses loses her fat suit and becomes a patient who, despite her pleas to see the doctor, is subjected to, among other indignities, the "pituitary squeeze." To a varied sound score including Bach, Fred Ho, *Stompin' Tom Connors* and *Rachel's*, the nurses dance in their fat suits. Then, when they lose them and dance in their own underwear over their surprisingly slim and spry little dancer bodies, *Nurses* takes on a quality of reflective pathos.