

Review: Conflicting Freedoms

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Free

Raw Moves

3 July 2014

Goodman Arts Centre Black Box

Run: 3-5 July 2014, 8pm

With a title like *Free*, it is clear that choreographer Ricky Sim seeks to define or explore freedom through dance. But that's where the clarity stops. Freedom is impossible to define yet, if asked to say what it is not, one can easily do so. The puzzling thing is that being able to say what it is not gets us no closer to seeing what it is. It is at the heart of this conundrum that possibilities are abound.

Sim chose to restrict his dancers with a choreography – as opposed to complete improvisation – that consists of movement games, physical theatre, a sketch show, and synchronised dance steps. From the get-go, the audience is challenged as they have to decide where to observe the piece in this free standing event. They are also subjected to ten minutes of watching the dancers just walking around in the beginning.

When the monotony is broken and the piece progressed to a series of movement games (tableaux and supposed improvisations) and physical theatre sequences, the commitment of the dancers shone through as there was a right amount of intensity and they adjusted their performances accordingly to accommodate the audience standing in the space. Synchronicity and flexibility were also apparent as they transit from stark to fluid movements seamlessly and clearly. The balance between innocent play and focused execution made the sequences rather enjoyable.

Lian Sutton stole the show with his pseudo-comic sketch as he sets the scene of a boy struggling against orthodoxy by trying to impress a football coach with his somewhat creative football tactics. While he could have slightly turned up his performative energy a notch, Sutton has a knack for comedy with his keen sense of timing and variable expressions. Whoever came up with the script must be commended as it was really funny and he or she should consider writing a sketch show.

While it was a generally enjoyable evening, I was not very affected by what was going on. The choreographed sequences merely illustrated instances of freedom and instances when one is restricted. However, it did not compel me to think about the concept of freedom any further.

Instead, what made me reflect on freedom is the fact that it is a free standing event and the audience is free to choose how they watch the show. The reader is advised to bear in mind that your fellow audience members may also choose to be blocked from watching. I was really puzzled when a couple of audience members chose to sit against the wall yet insisted that I move aside. This is despite the fact that I was one of the first to arrive and I stood at the same spot without moving for the whole duration of the show.

Perhaps choosing to miss the premise of the show or to forgo sense, rationality, and civility are forms of freedom as well. In this light, Raw Moves must be congratulated for putting so much faith in the competency of the audience while pulling off a decent show.

Free runs till the 5 July. Ticketing details at rawmovesfree.peatix.com