

# Seattle Post-Intelligencer

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## Petronio's choreography has staying power

BY ALICE KADERLAN

*Special to the P-I*

It's no small feat that Stephen Petronio has managed to keep his New York-based dance company on sound footing, both choreographically and financially, for 20 years now.

As Thursday night's performance at On the Boards demonstrated, he has created a movement style that is expansive, elegant and polished and an aesthetic that is appealing to some of the most provocative artists of our time with whom he has developed important collaborations.

"The Island of Misfit Toys," for instance, the most successful work on the program that Petronio has brought to Seattle, uses a simple but striking set design by visual artist Cindy Sherman. An enormous pillar of huge doll faces, an oversize doll with a scooped-out head and a large doll carriage with a bizarre set of twins immediately communicates that this is not a normal playroom.

Sure enough, when the "children" emerge, they are hardly what

### DANCE REVIEW

THE STEPHEN PETRONIO COMPANY

**WHEN:** Through Sunday

**WHERE:** On the Boards, 100 W. Roy St.

**TICKETS:** \$22, 206-217-9888


we expect. They almost look like dolls themselves and move in a woozy, off-kilter way so that it's not quite clear whether they are, in fact, real children or dolls come to life.

The whole work has an air of unreality about it as though the world is out of joint. The confusion is intensified by a recitation of mixed-up verse that accompanies the dancing. Petronio created "Island" in 2003, and it may be his way of working out the fact that our world, and New York, have been altered by the cataclysmic event that occurred on 9/11.

"Broken Man," a solo work that Petronio created in 2002 and which he performed beautifully on Thursday night, conveys an even greater sense of a world in disarray. The man

of the title twitches and contorts in all directions and his suit appears to have been partially torn off. It's a short work but Petronio is a powerful stage presence as he throws a leg out here or pulls an arm in there.

Ironically, the least successful work was "City of Twist," the work Petronio has explicitly said was created in response to 9/11. Despite the fine dancing of his talented company,

some dazzling choreography and an original score by Laurie Anderson, it's a relatively static piece that begins with great flare but doesn't live up to the promise of its early dramatic moments. 

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