

Petronio summer reunion

Summer Reunion
DancemOpolitan at Joe's Pub
June 14–15, 2007
Reviewed by Emily Macel

Family reunions should always include superheros and dancing.

In June, seven former members of Stephen Petronio's company performed at the intimate caberet-style setting of Joe's Pub—a fitting scene for the peculiar, lewd, and funny dancing that occurred that evening.

Petronio started the night off by reading a witty, original piece of poetry, discarding the pages into the audience as he read. The alumni in attendance were Gerald Casel, Ori Flomin, Ashleigh Leite, Jeremy Nelson, Jimena Paz, Todd Williams, and Ellis Wood.

The former company members (many are now teaching or dancing their own works in NYC) created choreography inspired by their favorite villain, icon, hero, and/or heroine for the concert, titled "Villains and Heroes, The 100 most influential people who (n)ever lived." So who showed up? A wide range of characters from Wonder Woman and Superman, to Barbie and Ken.

Gerald Casel, a compact, powerful, and relaxed mover, handed out dollar bills to the tables surrounding the stage, then danced an energetic modern work to "Mommy" by Missy Elliot. It was an awkward yet hypnotic pairing of music and movement.

In her first performance since giving birth, Ashleigh Leite chose Wonder Woman as her hero. Perhaps *It's No Wonder* is an ode to motherhood. Her body whips around, thrashing across the stage, and you'd never know she had just had a baby—she moves with the intensity of a tornado tearing through a cornfield.

In Jimena Paz's piece *B & C [Before and Consequence]*, she and Pascal Wettstein interrogate each other over tea. It seems to be inspired by a Forsythe-like scene of dance theatre. It's very strange and engaging, and it's unclear who is questioning whom, or what the intense session is about. Who's the hero and who's the villain here?

Todd Williams' piece, *Stand Beside Her*, gave a nod to the politics of war, a la Team America. Williams began the piece dressed in a whole lot of white fabric—intended to act as his burka, and throughout the piece disrobed and redressed himself in army fatigues (he's really more of a G.I. Joe than Ken). His Barbie, Jennifer Horner, never once came off of relevé, and her arms and legs moved as stiffly as you'd imagine a 6 foot tall Barbie would move. And what salute to America, as ironic as it was, would be complete without the sounds of John Wayne's patriotic ode, *Face the Flag*.

Other pieces on the bill included: A quirky duet by caped and mustachioed Jeremy Nelson and Francis Stansky; a duet of mind control between a masked and mysterious Ori Flomin and Amanda Wells, who is saved by a plastic action figure sized Superman (she makes out with the doll to show thanks); and a piece by Ellis Wood Dance called *Maculate Conception*, about a female Jesus danced by the company to the Christmas carol, "Do You Hear What I Hear."

It was a truly diverse family affair—the odd blend of choreography illustrates the personalities and movement styles inspired by Petronio. Like a father who watches over his offspring, during his introduction he proudly dubbed these alums the "Tribe Petronius."