

Flying, Staying and a Magic Place

Stephen Petronio Company does what they do and tries on Cunningham

By QUINN BATSON, APRIL 29, 2015



Photo by Yi-Chun Wu

Something old, something new, something borrowed...Stephen Petronio Company builds on the new and retrospective *Locomotor* (2014) to create *Locomotor/Non Locomotor* and presents Merce Cunningham's *Rainforest* (1968) with the return of former Cunningham dancer Melissa Toogood at Petronio's 30th Anniversary show at The Joyce Theater.

Toogood still lives up to her name, but the standout this year is the veteran Petronio company member Davalois Fearon. One of the joys of watching a Petronio performance is seeing which dancer steps up to a new level each year, or even each performance. Fearon has been a consistent presence since 2005, but whether spotlighted in *Non Locomotor* or flying through space in *Locomotor*, her clarity and sharpness of movement this year is phenomenal. Gino Grenek and Nicholas Sciscione also share spotlights and bring unique sparkle to Petronio movement this year.

Locomotor continues to be a strong presence on its own, but *Non Locomotor* adds an excellent complement and an update of sorts — exploring, as Petronio has been in recent years, "movement deep within a torquing center, sending surges of action throughout the body while stationary in space." Lighting performers primarily with overhead spotlights brings out accents and details in a wholly different way than broader lighting; it adds dimension and attack to Fearon, highlights Grenek's precision, especially in neck and hand movements, and enhances Sciscione's full-body undulations.

RainForest is fully a Cunningham creation and makes an odd energy change from the rest of the program, in the inauguration of "Bloodlines," Petronio's initiative to incorporate other choreographers' work in his concerts. As with any Cunningham creation, some audience will be fascinated and some will find their focus wandering. Giant silver balloonpillows conceived by Andy Warhol are certainly a striking and endlessly interesting presence, and their leisurely, nondirectional movement is mirrored somewhat in the pace and arc of the movement onstage.

Toogood, and several former Cunningham dancers helping in the staging, ensure the forest feels authentic.