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WEEKEND Arts MOVIES PERFORMANCES

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Sometimes It's Darkness, Sometimes It's Babble

Six weeks is not much time to make a dance — not sufficient, really, for most choreographers to see a vision fully to life. But it is enough to get some rich ideas

DANCE REVIEW

CLAUDIA
LA ROCCO

cooking, and that is what the Duo Multicultural Arts Center in the East Village presented on Wednesday in its inaugural Dance@DMAC commissioning series, an exciting addition to the contemporary performance scene.

The five works, seen in the center's raw little jewel box of a theater, showed dance to be one element of broader choreographic investigations: of time, of sound, of the imagination. Maria Hassabi's "Come in my house I want to hurt you!" continued her exploration of the female body as moving sculpture, objectified yet powerful. She spent much of this restless solo lying on a small Oriental rug (which brings up different connotations of the exotic other), pushing her slender body into extreme poses, her legs spread wide and face often hidden from the lights' glare and the audience's steady gaze.

Anna Sperber frustrated this gaze in "my imagination lives in the dark, but charlotte's imagination lives in the forest." She and Charlotte Gibbons wielded their own lights, using their bodies as shields so that the stage was often almost or completely dark. There were moments of theatrical magic, as when their gold jackets created a dance of sparkles on the walls, and moments when the technical jockeying seemed inadequate to Ms. Sperber's vision.

Similarly uneven but engrossing were offerings by Julian Bar-

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nett and Alex Escalante. A dancer-manipulated keyboard became a labored conceit in Mr. Barnett's "Piano Room" trio, but the movement, particularly an aggressively physical duet for him and Jocelyn Tobias, conjured a host of fraught relationships. Mr. Escalante's political solo, "syllababel: ill baby dr," also played with sound: recorded speeches and his rapid-fire torrent of babble, studded with loaded (at times heavy-handed) words. A short, strangled dance became a fiery protest.

Then came "Eva Protranspiration Cloud 9" by Keely Garfield, who seems to be moving ever further away from stability: her recent works are like tumbling stones in an uncomfortable, thrilling stream of consciousness where religion, politics, domestic life and sexuality intersect in wild fashion.

Here, she and Brandin Steffensen were a tempestuous couple, offset by the presence of Vivian Ra, Ms. Garfield's 8-year-old daughter. As Matthew Brookshire sang songs of the eternal and topical — including "I Can See Russia From Alaska (When I Look in Your Eyes)" — the adults skirmished. Tubular lights became a cross. A garbage lid became a fantastical helmet. Somehow, improbably, Ms. Garfield held it all together, just tightly enough.



ANTHONY RUDE

Dance@DMAC, at the Duo Multicultural Arts Center, features Maria Hassabi in her piece "Come in my house I want to hurt you!"