

Dance Magazine

Brian Brooks Moving Company

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Reviewed by Susan Yung

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Remember the movie *Fantastic Voyage*, in which a miniaturized sub navigating a man's body reveals astonishing secrets that were there all along? Brian Brooks' choreography is a kind of external exploration of human limits.



Jo-anne Lee, Brian Brooks, Alexander Gish, Nicholas Duran, and Weena Pauly in Brooks' *again again*
Photo by Julieta Cervantes, courtesy Dance Theater Workshop

He imparts his work with the sensibilities of both a laboratory scientist and a visual artist. In his latest work, *again again*, he shows a more serious side, to balance previous pieces that were notable for their pop-culture whimsy and signature color schemes. But strip those away and his kinetic inquisitiveness remains steadfast, as evident in this latest piece.

The choreography focused on an exercise, or a simple combined set of them, and dissected it. Nicholas Duran cradled Alexander Gish's elbows and tossed his arms upward as if juggling them. Gish's body began twisting, eventually circumscribing tilting ovals. In another set, a woman walked on her hands and feet, slid one shin along a kneeling man's back, and propelled herself forward by pushing off his shoulders while remaining parallel to the floor. Duran and Gish, joined by Jo-anne Lee, Weena Pauly, and Brooks, repeated variations on this, forming an Escher-like pyramid for a snapshot moment.

Brooks loves to shatter conventional notions of the human capacity for strength and endurance. Using the back wall almost like another floor, one dancer supported another as he walked up the wall. They reached a point where the walker froze, his body perpendicular to the wall as the supporter's arms locked like a weightlifter's. Burke Wilmore's lighting raked over the performers to burn black silhouettes, and Tom Lopez composed the industrial-noise soundscape.

Anakin Koenig created the delightful inflatable sculptures that eventually dominated DTW's cavernous stage—six wispy “clouds” and one shaped like a hot-air balloon, another a giant meatloaf. The sculptures were stowed under black draping at the start, and inflated (and deflated) surprisingly quickly. They were sometimes lit from within, like giant jellyfish.

In the final, powerful scene, Pauly stepped gingerly on Brooks' hands, positioned like stepping-stones. The care he took and how much perceived danger he seemed to undergo to ensure her safe passage was touching. And allowing even a small person like Pauly to put all her weight on Brooks' hand seemed reckless, but Brooks showed us a strength—in ourselves, too—that was there all along.

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