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dance review: ...Rocking the World... with Striking Choreography

MIT Artist in Residence Addresses Problems Faced by Women in Science

By **Natania Antler**
STAFF WRITER

Rocking The World: Women in Science and other works

MIT Theater Arts and Dance Theater Ensemble

Choreography by Edisa Weeks

Performance by Hortense Gerardo, Mona Hussein '09, Luciana Pereira G, Lily Tong G

April 14 and 15 at 8 p.m.

Little Kresge Theater

Women in science is a challenging theme to express in dance form, and it proved an intriguing title piece for a showcase of works by Edisa Weeks. Weeks, MIT's guest artist in residence, presented her creations at Little Kresge Theater last weekend, and "Rocking the World: Women in Science" created much anticipation. What resulted was a powerful piece that made its point clearly, yet with finesse. The entire performance was short and sweet, consisting of three compact works. While the second two dances were occasionally rough in technique, they compensated admirably for that with style and enthusiasm.

The performance opened with "Between an Arrow and a Fall," a striking solo danced by Weeks. She was accompanied by a video projection of her dancing that would sometimes shift, distort, or obscure her movements, depending on the mood of the music. Weeks' training was evident in this solo, as she danced beautifully. The choreography was varied and interesting, and took full advantage of its multimedia partner. As a testament to the skill of Weeks and Liubo Borissov, the designer of the multimedia component of the dance, the additional projection remained only a partner and did not steal the show or become undue distraction.

I was a bit less thrilled with the second piece, "Sound of Bound Wings." Though this work again featured striking choreography, I was too busy trying to figure out the message of the piece to enjoy the dancing. This may have been the point, as it was not a fluffy dance. In this duet, Weeks danced with Jeffrey Petersen, and they executed many unusual lifts and partnering moves. In an inversion of the traditional gender roles, Weeks opened the dance by walking on stage carrying a much shorter Petersen. This theme ran through the dance as Weeks did all of the heavy lifting — literally. The piece seemed to be about power and abuse, especially of women in partnerships. It left a bad taste in my mouth, but I think that may have been its purpose.

The title work, "Rocking the World: Women in Science," was well worth the trip to the theater. In this piece, three female dancers knocked on a closed door and pounded on an unresponsive wall at the back of the stage. They donned lab coats and gloves, and danced to music and recorded audio of interviews with many varied women scientists. One at a time, they made it to the other side of the wall, either by sneaking through the door, getting a boost up over the top, or finally pushing the wall over entirely. At one especially touching point, soloist Lily Tong G danced on the wrong side of the wall with a see-saw prop — to the recording of an interview with a woman who had juggled having children and attending graduate school for science.

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dance review: ...Rocking the World... with Striking Choreography - The Tech

At first I wondered how someone could choreograph a dance to address such a complex theme without either hitting the audience over the head with obvious symbolism or becoming incomprehensibly abstract. Weeks, however, tackled this challenge with humor and style. Above all, this was because her dancers were actually real, live women in science; if they were anyone else this dance might have struck a false chord.

Weeks has proved, with style, that she can lead her audience to contemplate both her choreography and subject matter. If MIT is ever graced by more of her works, I recommend going to see them.

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