

thINKingDANCE

Upping the ante on dance coverage and conversation

[HOME](#) [ARCHIVE](#) [ABOUT](#) [CONTACT](#)



Photo: Alexander Izilaev

[Download PDF](#)

BalletX Under the Microscope

by Kristen Gillette

I arrived at the Wilma Theater for BalletX's spring series eager to hear from the choreographers at a pre-show talkback. Although they seem new at this--Christine Cox and the three choreographers struggled passing the microphone around without getting tangled in the wires (Cox joked that this little dance they did was the fourth piece of the evening)—they offered a lot of insight into the pieces to be performed that evening.

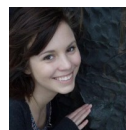
Three different choreographers zoomed in on the evening's three premieres in their answers to the pre-show talkback questions. Olivier Wever described *Instantly Bound* as an abstract and deconstructed view of recent horrific events like the Sandy Hook School shooting—as well as how the community bonds after a tragedy. Tobin Del Cuore explained that *No Sleep* represented feelings of solitude and loneliness people felt while surrounded by others in the city. Gabrielle Lamb didn't delve into the meaning of her work; instead she told us that she titled it *Stations of Mercury*, because she was alarmed to learn that Mercury would be in retrograde during the time she choreographed for BalletX. I found their descriptions riveting and was ready to dive in.

As *Instantly Bound* begins, a single spotlight flickers on. We see a man. The spotlight turns off. Flickers on. Another man appears. Off and on again. The first man is alone, collapsed on the floor. When the other dancers appear, their heads are hung low, slouching. Sliding legs forward. Left. Right. Are they zombies? I think back to Wever's description of the piece and can't quite figure out what he was trying to represent through this movement. Are they the dead? Or, are they the community? I'm not sure, but the zombie-esque movements seemed like an inappropriate choice to me given the subject matter. Looking back, I wonder if I felt this way because my emotions were running high because of the Boston Marathon bombings which happened two days before the show's premiere.

Allison Walsh prepares for sleep as her solo in *No Sleep* begins. She strips down to a skimpy pair of underwear and a lacy bra as she lies down beneath a fiberglass sculpture hanging from the ceiling. It looks like the underside of an iceberg. The sculpture lowers down, hanging dangerously close to her. She jerks awake, with a tremor. Then she does straight-arm plank, suspending herself above the ground for several seconds. She stretches her leg out to the side and rolls over onto her back and then lifts her leg up to practically touch her nose. She does it effortlessly, as if these are the simple stretches she does when she can't sleep.

I'm not sure about the role of the sculpture. Its top is flat and it rotates so the flat surface faces the audience during part of the piece. A video, created by Del Cuore, is projected onto it—but I can't make out the images. Was the video unreadable on purpose? I'm not sure. Although I'm confused by this, the dancers in *No Sleep* wow me with their impressive physical abilities.

The dancers form an assembly line as if they're working in a food factory. Some add parts to the conveyer belt from their stations, another appears to be taste-testing the product. The dancers in *Stations of Mercury* are dressed in retro costumes—think poodle skirts and bobby socks. After a final pas de deux, a chain of interlinked dancers appears downstage to pull a couple who are on the ground offstage, dragging them along as the audience laughs. Despite the grim



Kristen Gillette

Kristen Gillette (TD Intern and Writer) is a senior Magazine Journalism undergrad at Temple University looking to learn more about arts criticism and writing, driven by her new passion for dance. After taking dance lessons as a child, Kristen returned to ballet as an adult and blogs about her experience at Adultballerinaproject.com.

[More about Kristen](#)

Recently from Kristen

Cutting and Pasting with Kirsten Kaschock

In our workshop with Kirsten Kaschock, she offered several mind-bending exercises. One involved assembling... [View](#)

How to Write Like A N.Y. Times Critic, or Notes on a Workshop with Claudia La Rocco

Sunday, February 24th at the LAB, Painted Bride Arts Center You have the freedom to determine the... [View](#)



Everything is Beautiful at the Ballet

"Ballet is more than layers of tulle and satin shoes. It's ripples of muscle, explosive athleticism... [View](#)

[View all from Kristen](#)

Categories

[Reviews](#)

Tags

[Fringe](#) [Dancefusion](#) [Nicole Bindler](#) [Bharata Natyam](#) [Carbon Dance Theatre](#) [Meredith Rainey](#) [Matthew Neenan](#) [Kate Watson-Wallace](#)

[Gabrielle Revlock](#) [Philadelphia Dance Projects](#) [Group Motion](#) [Motion Pictures](#) [PARD](#) [Curt Haworth](#) [Shannon Murphy](#) [Mixed Grille](#) [Mount Vernon Dance Space](#) [Scratch Night](#) [thefidget](#) [Megan Bridge](#) [Peter Price](#) [Compagnie Marie Chouinard](#) [Ballet X](#) [Shibani Patnaik](#) [FringeArts](#) [PIFA](#) [Koresh Dance Company](#) [Ronen Koresh](#) [Headlong Dance Theater](#) [The Performance Garage](#) [Hybridge](#) [Last Mondays ETC.](#) [Performance Series](#) [Live Arts Brewery \(LAB\)](#) [Spiel Uhr](#) [Studio 34](#) [Kun-Yang Lin](#) [Mascher Space](#) [Co-op](#) [Fresh Juice](#) [Miller Rothlein \(MIRO\)](#) [Pennsylvania Ballet](#) [Julie Diana](#) [Leah Stein Dance Company](#) [Annie Wilson](#) [Christina Gesualdi](#) [Silvana Cardell](#) [The Naked Stark](#) [Christ Church](#)

foreboding of Lamb's piece, hers is the most playful of the three. I found myself laughing throughout the entire piece--it is silly in a good way.

Throughout the entire evening, I wonder if the pre-show talk colored my opinion of these pieces too much. It was as if I were examining each piece under a microscope—and I got upset when something didn't seem to make perfect sense to me, even though the general feeling of each piece aligned with how the choreographer explained it. I feel as if I would have enjoyed a post-show talk from BalletX more; it would have been great to probe the minds of the choreographers afterwards.

Spring Series, BalletX, April 15-21, www.balletx.org

By Kristen Gillette

May 2, 2013



Add a comment...

Post to Facebook

Posting as Gabrielle Lamb (Not you?)

Comment

Facebook social plugin

Have more to say?

Write a letter to the editor. [Click here to get started](#)

[Neighborhood House](#) [Rennie Harris Puremovement](#)
[Pallabi Chakravorty](#) [thirdbird](#) [Levi Gonzalez](#)
[Raphael Xavier](#) [Beau Hancock](#) [Nicole Canuso](#) [Jessica Morgan](#)
[Sahar Javedani](#) [thefidget space](#) [Trisha Brown](#) [Kelly Bond](#)
[Melissa Krodman](#) [Philly Fringe](#) [Falls Bridge](#) [Manfred Fischbeck](#) [Mascher Space Coop](#)
[Tori Lawrence](#) [Barnes Foundation Museum](#) [Paris Opera Ballet](#)
[Glacial Decoy](#) [Elba Hevia y Vaca](#) [Pasión y Arte](#) [Deborah Jowitt](#) [John Jasperse](#)
[Deborah Hay](#) [Meg Foley](#) [Jeanne Ruddy Dance](#) [Dancing With The Stars](#)
[Anna Trebunskaya](#) [Jonathan Roberts](#) [Annenberg Center](#) [Community Education Center](#)
[Charles O. Anderson](#) [Green Chair Dance Group](#) [Gregory Holt](#) [Hua Hua Zhang](#) [Sebastienne](#)
[Mundheim](#) [Philadanco](#) [Indiegogo](#) [Lucinda Childs](#) [Zornitsa Stoyanova](#) [Leah Stein](#) [Team Sunshine](#)
[Performance Corporation](#) [anonymous bodies](#) [Elizabeth Zimmer](#) [Brian Sanders](#) [Live Arts](#) [Merce Cunningham](#)
[Bethany Formica](#) [John Luna](#) [Seen & Heard](#) [The Requisite Movers](#) [John Cage](#) [Crane Arts](#)
[Old School](#) [Amanda Miller](#) [Tobin Rothlein](#) [Painted Bride](#) [Olive Prince](#) [Kùlú Mèlé](#) [Lesya Popil](#)
[idiosynCrazy productions](#) [Ishmael Houston-Jones](#) [Danse4Nia](#) [Repertory Ensemble](#) [Philadelphia Museum of Art](#)
[Rocky Awards](#) [Christina Zani](#) [The Rock School](#) [Arts Bank](#) [Germaine Ingram](#) [The Kimmel Center](#) [Asian Arts Initiative](#)
[Jaamil Kosoko](#) [William Forsythe](#) [Merián Soto](#) [Branch Dances](#) [Eleanor Goudie-Averill](#) [Performance Garage](#)
[Nichole Canuso](#) [Claudia La Rocco](#) [Bill T. Jones](#) [Congress on Research in Dance \(CORD\)](#) [Balanchine](#)
[First Person Arts Festival](#) [Painted Bride Arts Center](#) [Wendy Perron](#) [Dance Magazine](#) [Lionel Popkin](#)
[Megan Mazarick](#) [Kirsten Kaschock](#) [Dance Celebration](#) [Annenberg](#) [Step Afrika](#) [Susan Rethorst](#)
[Subcircle](#) [Anna Drozdowski](#) [JJ Tiziou](#) [How Philly Moves](#)

Help spread the word