



Megan Sprenger / mvworks will get the audience involved at P.S. 122

...WITHIN US.

P.S. 122
150 First Ave. at East Ninth St.
May 17-24
Tickets: \$10-\$20
212-352-3101
<http://www.ps122.org>
<http://mvworks.wordpress.com>



Two years ago, mvworks artistic director Megan V. Sprenger, who is also the director of marketing for Dance Theater Workshop (and regular contributor to DTW's blog), quickly earned a reputation for creating challenging, unconventional dance with her first evening-length piece, *NO WHERE*, which combined the geometric theories of Blaise Pascal with the cinematic photographs of Gregory Crewdson. For her second commission, "...within us.," running at P.S. 122 through May 24, Sprenger drew inspiration from artist Jacob Landau's violent, provocative imagery, resulting in a brilliant evening-length piece of confrontational dance theater that gets right in the audience's face — literally. In P.S. 122's small, dark downstairs space, approximately fifty ticket holders mill about, slowly joined by dancers Tara O'Con, Maria Parshina, Alli Ruszkowski, and Richert Schnorr, who engage members of the audience in friendly conversation. Barefoot but wearing regular clothing — three of the dancers are in jeans — they mingle as if at a cocktail party and not the main attraction. But soon they begin shaking their hands and bodies as if going into seizures, then start whirling through the crowd, falling hard to the ground, and getting right in people's faces, staring into their eyes, gently touching their shoulders, and coming dangerously close to smashing into them.

After collecting themselves (and regaining their breath), they spread out spray-painted wooden boxes — which had been hanging from the ceiling and piled up on the sidelines — across the space, leading the audience to selected seats. Once everyone is on a box and might be feeling at least the slightest bit comfortable, the four dancers take off again, running in and out of the crowd, crashing into the walls and one another, crawling like insects between the boxes, and waving their arms and legs, just barely missing the audience members' heads or knees. Sometimes they'll use people's bodies to help get off the floor; other times they'll approach a person and then fall backward, hitting the ground over and over again. They wrestle on the ground, bounce against the doors, and then suddenly stand stock-still, waiting for Joe Levasseur's lighting and Jason Sebastian's soundscapes to signal their next move. But instead of feeling like trapped victims, the audience develops a fascinating rapport with the frantic dancers, a bond of trust forming among everyone in the room. At one point, Richert stands in front of one audience member for an extended period of time, never breaking eye contact, as the other dancers continue moving in a far corner; Richert's hand begins to rise almost imperceptibly, reaching out as if he's in desperate need of help. It's a critical moment, revealing the complex relationship between performer and viewer, which is very different from the one that exists outside in the "real" world. Sprenger's "...within us." is a thrilling work, a thoroughly involving hour that leaves the talented dancers and the brave audience feeling energized and alive.