

Raw, fearless new dance

Review of "She's gone away" for the Peterborough Examiner by
Jonathan Fiddler, Feb 3, 2007

A packed house at Market Hall Performing Arts Centre last night bore witness to a raw and fearless performance of "She's Gone Away" by Toronto choreographer/performer Susanna Hood. Intense throughout its one-hour span, the audience was left breathless as Hood transformed herself in lightning turns and led the crowd through amorphous, and yet compelling, territories.

Created by Hood in collaboration with stage director Jennifer Tarver, with music and soundtracks by Hood and Nilan Perera, this onslaught left this reviewer engrossed, repulsed, elated and interested in watching where Hood would choose to next focus her exceptional creativity.

The Market Hall stage set with broken segments of walls, decorated in a dated fashion, the program began with Hood seated on a chair in a busted out corner prim with a concertina in her lap.

As she began to play and sing about a visit to the beach, the blue of the water, the heat of the sand, she became more and more wanton.

From that one point on, it seemed Hood was never in one spot for more than a few seconds. In constant movement within and without the set, she was in motion and in high emotion too. Hood would seamlessly move from sensual and provocative, then in a blink, to slathering and animal, threatening and pacing, turn again to skittish vigilance and tenuous exploration, awaiting threats from every corner.

As remarkable as Hood's astonishing physicality, is the soundscape for this piece.

With her voice electronically altered at points to make her sound thick and simian or fractured and feral, co-composer Perera, backing Hood with bass, recordings and effects, responded to and supported Hood's blitz of moods and states with remarkable subtlety, never letting his gadgets interfere with Hood's performance, but bouying it up and lending it more gravity, punch or pathos.

Possesed of a clear, melodic and powerful voice, Hood used this asset to full advantage as well.

And what of the subject of the show; they are myriad, but with a

linking referent idea that is sexual and sensual. Abandon and abandonment appeared to be a dominant theme, whether it be physically allowing oneself to revel in pleasure, or abandonment of a moral boundary or social taboo.

And with that, vulnerability. Allowing oneself to enter a purely emotional and physical state, to abandon one's self-consciousness and control and entrusting oneself to the care of another. And then the inevitable consequences, whether they be physical pleasure, torment, or violation and the effect on the persona and their psyche, and how they comp in the aftermath.

The audience's reaction was strong, as was the performance and the content. Susanna Hood delivered a powerful and brave program, one with few peers and the likes of which are too seldom seen.