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[cultural calendar](#)

[current activities](#)

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[feedback](#)

[links](#)



Performing Arts: Dance

SOAKING WET

October 3, 2015

A mixed Soaking WET bill is a dinner party in a treasure chest. It is the kind of diversity many presenters strive for but rarely can naturally attain. For its thirteenth season, David Parker has gathered ambassadors of multimedia, alienation, world fusion, and age.

Rachel Cohen opened with New Developments, for a cast of four humans and scores of paper sculptures by Stephanie Beck. Three dancers hold lanky forms, each divided into three segments. They fidget like mutant insect antennae until from under a pile of cubes a concealed Cohen slithers backwards, bringing all three figures to attention on her shedding exoskeleton. She slips into a large cylinder just the right size to reduce her torso to a single moveable joint. The tradeoff seems an improvement in strength at the cost of mobility, but the material is nonetheless soft. While bones must be hard, they require space within.

Meanwhile, the others stay separate from their structures, adjusting with their hands like chiropractors in training. Against Cohen's immersive relationship, we see abstracted expressions human relationships on a scale from codependent to negligent within joints interlocking people in a social skeleton.

With Reperformance: 1993-1996 It Could Have Been Different, Karen Bernard puts us in a snow-globe filled with a flurried history of work, vibrantly costumed by Liz Prince, costumed once more by new performers. Following a video of Bernard's renditions, the dances are reanimated. Bernard's movement language distills line and directionality so much it is only natural to continue the process into distortion.

Donna Castello is heavily agile in Work, aided by her boots and coveralls, marching in turned-in fourth positions between a menage of rotating cannonball jumps. Strange Dear finds Mersiha Mesihovic re-imagining mechanical crunches through a segmented supine promenade as bitterly mouthwatering, navigating the coldest principles of angles and spirals with sexual fire.

Footsteps on the... and It Could Have Been Different use pop music to find pleasure and duty in the groove of Bernard's stark vocabulary. Bumblebee stripes, Selena's rendition of "A Boy Like That," and a stealthy Lisa Parra leaping, crouching, and mouthing lyrics out of sync painstakingly build up psychic breakdown, Ryan Migge's bilingual singing and maudlin ad-libbing notwithstanding. Like Cohen's sense of skeleton, each performer is a body part in a larger organism of transcribing not just language, but aesthetic behavior.

Deirdre Towers uses her dancers resourcefully to grapple with cultural expression in Cross Currents. What is sung as a futile love story is danced between traditional flamenco dancer Elisabet Torras and flamenco-influenced contemporary dancer Olsi Gjeci, depicting the search for a heritage not grown up with, yet fully longed for.

Comin' or Goin' pits Marsi Burns and Alice Teirstein in an alternate plane of

existence where thoughts only occur. They react to stimuli that are never seen through pedestrian sequences of motion and stillness. Unexpressed ideas radiate through the eyes as pure feelings, questioning if our voiced thoughts are ever fully formed.

EYE ON THE ARTS< NY -- Jonathan Matthews