



Silly Serves a Purpose

Women in Motion use absurdity to get serious

By [QUINN BATSON](#)
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Absurdity rules the 2012 Women in Motion show, the dance segment of the 13th annual *estrogenius festival*. Estrogen genius fuels both choreographies presented.



Photo by Laura Silleras

Rachel Cohen

Laurie Berg and Bessie McDonough-Thayer play with invisibility, blind synchronicity and zesty tunes from the sixties and eighties, in *Permission to Fail*. A perky Coca-Cola jingle almost fails to rouse the two, who remain faceless and mostly seated in form-fitting black outfits that are hooded front and back. They refuse to enthuse, teasing us occasionally with little bursts of activity that usually end in flopping. These little movement segments are fluid and impressively synched, given the blackout headgear they wear. They play with, and usually against, the music, occasionally making points, while they stay almost invisible against the black floor and black back curtain. It is an amusing anti-performance, cleverly minimal but hardly empty. When they finally unmask themselves, it is not a "tada" moment but a deadpan presentation — a sort of 'What, you expect us to smile? Not. We will continue to be invisible and thoughtful with or without hoods.'

WOMEN IN MOTION 2012

Choreography by: **Laurie Berg, Rachel Cohen**.
Dancers: **Laurie Berg with Bessie McDonough-Thayer**
Rachel Cohen with Alisa Fendley Remi Harris, Rebecca Ketchum and Masumi Kishimoto.
Set design by: **Racoco**.

Rachel Cohen and her company Racoco make a much bigger production of thoughtful absurdity, using almost every sort and weight of wood

SCHEDULE

TBG Theater
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imaginable, from playing-card-thin clappers to a healthy length of heavy timber, in *I Would*. There

is a Medieval, knightly quality to this whole endeavor, an earnestness that never falters, in this "story about Self, Determination and Self-Determination as told through Dance and Woodworking." Elaborate and ridiculous structures and suits of armor, often assembled while we watch, fill the stage. The dancers — Cohen, Alisa Fendlley, Remi Harris, Rebecca Ketchum and Masumi Kishimoto — are all impressive and intelligent movers, even as they enter squat-walking like human ducks, a single finger held aloft as an antenna or personal mini-flag. In the hands of lesser performers, this setup could fail miserably, but these five thrive. Cohen is king to her knights and clearly holds court as things begin, but by the end, each warrior is ready for her own coronation, in a ring of her peers with flower-hands all around, like some '40s musical extravaganza. It is charming and even surprisingly touching, and every bit of absurdity makes sense by the end.

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