

Looking Back To Move Ahead: ReVision Celebrates Ten Years of Discovery and Innovation

By Krystal Collins

Proving that change can bring about new possibilities, ReVision Dance Company, under the artistic direction of Shannon Quinn, premiered its new site-specific work, *Passage*. The hour-long piece kinesthetically explores the passage of time, a serendipitous theme as ReVision celebrates ten years as one of three resident companies at Dance Place. When asked to reflect on ReVision's ten-year history, Carla Perlo, co-founder and director emerita of Dance Place, said, "Shannon has progressed as a choreographer and the company has a prolific repertory that can be utilized for family-friendly performances in schools, theaters and other community settings."

Perlo should know. As artistic director of Carla & Company, she focused on accessible, family-friendly performances for the community and in 2011 organically transitioned the group to Quinn as ReVision Dance Company. This season Dance Place is marking 40 years with the theme "Fortitude." It certainly took much fortitude for Quinn and company to embark on the journey of choreographing a site-specific work when many rehearsals took place off-site on Zoom due to the global pandemic. A first for ReVision, the May 21-23, 2021, outdoor site-specific performance opened the company up to discovery and innovation. Reflecting on this change, Quinn said, "It [was] very freeing because we were outside the theater walls, but it presented [new] challenges." Quinn went on to talk about challenges like accessible bathrooms, dancing in and supplying shoes for the performers and the flow of life that goes on outside "the consistency of the four-sided theater." I was privy to these challenges and had the pleasure of watching Quinn, the production team and the dancers (myself included) problem-solve while maintaining artistic integrity. When invited to write about *Passage* in March of 2021, little did I know I would intimately come to know the piece. I was unexpectedly delighted to join the company just one month before the premier.

Passage begins on the 8th Street Arts Park, the outdoor creative and communal space that connects Dance Place with the residential artist living space, Brookland Artspace Lofts. One lone dancer -- founding company member Alison Talvacchio -- emerges from the back of the

Dance Place building sauntering with slow and sustained effort. She is joined by Triana Brown and the two melt seamlessly into unison. The pattern continues as Katherine LiPuma, Amber Lucia Chabus, Terra Bergamy and I join the flock of meditative arm circles, spine undulations and sustained leg lifts. Just when the audience becomes entranced, the dancers break and find their way to the Arts Park communal seating area for a moment of performed rest. These brief vignettes of humanity continue to be a theme, both throughout *Passage* and ReVision's repertoire.

When asked what common arc Perlo sees in ReVision's work, she said the "high artistic quality of both performance and choreography, [that] explores important humanitarian issues that are universal in their concern." Quinn also expressed that her work is "an entry point that every single human can have an opinion on." The introductory section ends in a witty and meaningful surprise: a white Subaru Outback pulls up blasting Paul Simon's "You Can Call Me Al." While it's a fun segue, this moment is a farewell ode to Talvacchio, a blast from the past about the company loading up the van for early morning school shows, as well as a metaphoric take on who and what drives the company forward.

Throughout this hour-long excursion, the dance happens in four locations. Each place comes alive with possibilities and strikes curiosity with every expansive arm gesture or space-engulfing run. The second location, a short walk on 8th Street, is a mechanic shop, formally known as Lee's Auto Service and now run by Manny, a cheery automotive craftsman. The juxtaposition of the rugged urban backdrop with breathy arm gestures, shifting formations and the flowy linen slacks worn by some of the dancers creates space to consider ways our environment can shape our perception of time. The choreography builds, ultimately revealing a duet for Amber and Terra that flies high with leaps and jumps, building on the opening sequences seen at the Arts Park with heightened intensity.

Further along 8th Street, arguably the most futuristic stop, fuses live performance with virtual reality segments captured on television screens and smartphones. Boris Willis, Associate Professor of computer game design at George Mason University, and the augmented reality designer, imbeds technology into the dance. Audience members may choose a performer, scan the corresponding QR code, and watch as their avatar moves alongside the actual performers. The large garage doors of The Edgewood Arts Center lend themselves to the work as dancers appear and disappear with swift accuracy before the audience's eyes. Perhaps this game of

seen and unseen metaphorically symbolizes the fleeting characteristic of memories: here one moment then gone in a flash. Quinn, in collaboration with Willis and the dancers, craftily dig into the idea of time in a fresh and meaningful way by fusing the ephemerality of live dance with virtual reality, as if the performers live on in an infinite space.

Whisked away to the final location, across busy Monroe Street, the dancers -- still wearing their crisp combos of sleeveless tank tops and neutral-colored slacks -- barrel down the pedestrian thoroughway of Monroe Street Market with fierce efficiency. The dancers and I weave in and out of each other, making sure to stay together in the tight clump. Suddenly, bursting from the clump, a series of trios bounces our gaze from one place to the next like a visual pinball machine. Then, the clump reconvenes to remind us of what once was: slow and sustained with moments of acceleration. One by one, each peels away to resume a seated position -- that performed rest -- until Alison is left, the lone dancer from the Arts Park sequence. Emotional chords of the piano music (*Small Memory* by Jon Hopkins) lull the audience one last time, as Alison's breezy and bold movements ground the work; she literally makes contact with the ground in effortless inversions. Finally, all the dancers assertively stride away from the audience and toward the Brookland/CUA Metro Station entrance, as if they are walking away toward their futures, toward the future of ReVision Dance Company.

This past year has been devastating in so many ways, reinforcing for us all about the constancy of change. In ReVision's tenth year, many shifts, like pivoting to a new rehearsal model on Zoom and choreographing outside of a traditional theater space, took place. *Passage* shows that ReVision is not afraid of change; in fact, artistic director Quinn welcomes it. ReVision has resilience and will continue to withstand the test of time.

Hailing from the Midwest, **Krystal Leniece Collins** (she/they) captivated their first audience in the produce section of the local Moo & Oink (may the beloved Chicago grocery chain rest in power). They are a performer, choreographer, dance educator, writer, administrator and, most importantly, a proud power disrupting Sagittarius. After graduating from the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign (BFA '18), they currently move, groove, and reside in Washington, D.C., and have danced for Contradiction Dance Theatre, darlingdance, Heart Stück Bernie, AJ Collabs, ReVision Dance Company and Extreme Lengths Productions. Krystal has also written

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