

DANCE REVIEW

Keigwin + Company at Annenberg

By **Merilyn Jackson**
FOR THE INQUIRER

Choreography that's easy to read is not necessarily easy to dance.

New York's decade-old Keigwin + Company opened Thursday night at the Annenberg Dance Celebration in its second appearance there in two years. The troupe gave a concert of four legible works with varying degrees of difficulty.

The closing work, 2009's *Tryptich* (by artistic director and choreographer Larry Keigwin), was the most demanding, and I'd have liked to see more of this caliber from this fine company of dancers, three men and three women.

In sexy black-mesh costumes by Karen Young, they burst from the wings running open-chested, arms trailing as if lunging at an intangible finish line. To Jonathan Melville Pratt's pulsing score, they retreated from the stage and rapidly reentered in successive waves, so they began to look like a company of 60 instead of six.

Dazzling combinations of duets, trios, or full-company phrases, with geometric and architectural effects created by angled limbs, faded to curvy solos and blew up again into mechanical groupings that faced the audience, giving us semaphore arm signals. Read this, they seemed to say. And if the meaning blurs, that's all right. You get the theme.

Love Songs from 2006 (by Keigwin with the Company) gave us Harold Robbins heat. Emily Schoen and Brandon Courney opened and closed the piece with adolescent-crush cuteness to Roy Orbison's full-throttle "Blue Bayou" and "Crying."

The two middle duets were danced sensuously by Jaclyn Walsh and Matthew Baker, to songs by Aretha Franklin, and

Ashley Browne and Kile Hotchkiss, to Nina Simone. Both duets had unusual lifts that began or ended unexpectedly. Walsh buttlifted Baker singlehandedly onto her shoulder in a startling and funny strongwoman display.

Mattress Suite, a work that evolved over three years starting in 2001, was six individual pieces strung together like Jacqueline Susann quotes. "Dress" opened with Browne and Baker dancing and stripping on either side of an upended mattress on their wedding night.

The "Three Way" section had the company's men in tighty whities behaving gymnastically on a bed, until one leaves two behind.

With four sets of glitter curtains and set to Sinatra oldies, this year's *Girls* was all flash and little panache. The company's women looked a bit silly in Anaya Cullen's mousy boy pants and suspenders crashing through the tinsel one by one. I lost interest in their repetitive coy exits behind it. It read monosyllabically, more like "Jill Less Jack."

Additional performances: 2 and 8 p.m. Saturday at the Annenberg Center, 3680 Walnut St. Tickets: \$20-\$55. Information: www.AnnenbergCenter.org or 215-898-3900.



Emily Oldak and Gary Schaufeld in Keigwin + Company's Dance Celebration engagement at Annenberg Center.
MATTHEW MURPHY

