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SEARCH ...

Review: Raphael Xavier – Points of Interest

🕒 November 7, 2017 👤 Ashabi Rich ✉ Ashabi Rich 💬 0



Ashabi Rich for Dance Journal | photos by Frank Bicking

ays don't pop and lock, but they do hip, hop, break, and fall. They roll, twirl, spin, flip, skip and, for quick seconds, fly horizontally to ground. At times, briefly humpbacked and knees flexed, they

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Review: Raphael Xavier – Points of Interest

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ue out like indigenous deity Kokopelli. These five dancers, forming Xavier's choreography, put in a hardcore performance that looked grueling and fascinating in its runaway creativity. This discipline is a tribute to the endurance of the human body to seemingly impossible tasks gracefully and rhythmically. It defies the structure, its purpose, and construction while relying on it all. That bare, hard black floor was a canvas that briefly provided a background for the intense display of living sculptures whose trails of energy were almost made visible. The sound of their respiration evidenced pushing out used up oxygen in burnt Co2 and replacing it with lungful's of fresh air to refresh those strong hearts and wired, sinew-strapped muscles with chi.

Native Philadelphian Xavier is a renaissance man. Music composer, poetry performer, artist, photographer, dancer, choreographer, mentor and Princeton University professor, he characterizes himself as the kid who refuses to grow up and abhors the thought and reality of aging. At 47 he's kept it together, overcoming a spinal injury that left him paralyzed on his left side. He refused to give in to the prognosis, using his mind and discipline to recover and come back, a living, shining comeback kid, fully "grewed up" despite his denials. He's exploring that frontier space, a pharaoh with a shining silver ring in his groomed, grey goatee. Beatnik of the breakers.

The youngest performer, Josh Culbreath (who should never be without knee pads), is a whirlwind human Tesla going from zero to sixty in four seconds, stepping out fearlessly to take the ride in his mind's eye. He is looking, as are all of them, to continue this dance art form as their visionary mentor/teacher Xavier continues exploring the performance experience of a dancer who must move where time takes everyone lucky enough to stay corporeally on the planet. With the sheer physicality of it, the speed, adaptability to any music, no music, and spoken word, this dance form could, foreseeably, go into Olympic competition.

All of the break-dancers, Xavier, Culbreath, Ricky RocAny Romo, Jerry Valme, and Christopher LaPlante brought personal style, configurations, concepts, and energies, though the core movements of hip hop are very real and present. They were layered like notes in measures of a composition_ at times in counterpoint, other times in trigger-sharp unison. Their bodies painted the air with roots reaching into familiar dance forms that have been shared, passed down and handed over from the dance repertoire of Senegal, jazz, indigenous, modern, contemporary, mime, and Angola and Brazil's capoeira; not

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the moving, cold terror often expressed in Japanese butoh, but the tingling thrill of Sun Ra's "Space is the Place."

Sweat flew from Xavier's brow like an anointed man flinging out holy water over the enraptured. Like fired up molecules in a cell, these five shifted, settled, shook up and resettled. Air sculptures, centripetal movement, individualistic forces, and the fictional oneness of the Borg. Disconnected and connected in turn, Point of Interest is an orchestra of movement. The works are waterfalls of art, musicality, and introspection. They are moving asanas. For sure, all of these dancers are movement junkies. If you know drummers, you get that drummers gotta drum; and for sure B-boys gotta break.




Zellerbach Theater, Saturday, November 4, 2017

Choreography- Raphael Xavier. Also: Josh Culbreath, Jerry Valme, Ricky Romo

Music: Raphael Xavier; Portico Quartet; Davie Sylvian; System of a Down; SOHN

Poetry: Leigh Mrlei Nelson; Performed by Raphael Xavier

Lighting Designer, Production Manager: Bob Steineck

 About the Author

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About **Ashabi Rich**

Ashabi Rich, a Norristown native, began dancing in A.D. Eisenhower High School's extra-curricular dance club studying Graham technique. While attending

Swarthmore College, she continued in modern dance through elective dance classes under Patricia Boyer who eventually established the department for Swarthmore's major in dance. Ashabi later went on to become a dance major at Temple

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JOAN MYERS BRC
ON Terri Shockley



University studying with Hellmut Gottschild, Eva Gholson, and Patricia Hobson among others. While at Temple she performed with the East Indian Dance club (Kathak). She became a company dancer with Philadelphia raised ballet dancer John Jones (United Souls of America), and later spent six years with Robert "Baba" Crowder's Kulu-Mele African Dance and Drum Company. She has also been a guest dancer with Alo!Brasil, and taught at the Stephen's School of Dance in Germantown.

Ashabi has studied dance under dance and drum icon John Hines, Faye Snow, Gilset Mora, Carmen Butler, Ione Nash, Dottie Wilkie, Onyin Harris, Youssouf Koumbassa, and Cachet Ivey. As a student at the American Dance Festival/Connecticut College, Ashabi studied under Clay Taliaferro, Walter Nix, Gay Delange, and Thelma Hill. Ashabi is a Certified Reiki II practitioner in the Mikao Usui lineage through Reiki Master Helen Blue and Grandmaster Earlene Green. She is a martial arts aficionado having studied judo, Praying Mantis kung fu, Wing Chun kung fu with Sifu Mo Bah Wei (Frank Wyatt), Shotokan karate (Teruyuki Okazaki), Akido (Yukio Utada), and Jujitsu-Shotokan karate (Andrew Lyn. Sr.). She is SAG-AFTR membership eligible from the movie-In Her Shoes (screen credit Asabi Rich.) and is a graduate of Temple University with a BA in English. Currently Ashabi is a graduate student at Temple University's Klein College of Media and Communication studying for an MS in Globalization and Development Communication.

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« **PREVIOUS**

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