

# Limber Bodies, Heart and Soul | Dance | Shepherd Express

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Photo by Paul Mitchell

*Reckless Wonders*, last weekend's Wild Space Dance Company concert at the Stiemke Studio, is named for its dance makers, a group of company artists, former members and guests presenting original work.

The program included a substantial excerpt from "Carried Away," Founding Artistic Director Debra Loewen's well-received concert presented in Brooklyn in March. I imagined myself a New Yorker as I watched the performers Mauriah Kraker, Monica Rodero, Dan Schuchart and Yeng Vang-Strath dance in an abstract modern style in varying combinations and solo passages, and I wondered: Who are these Milwaukeeans? They seem to be nice people, they play, they comfort; their limber bodies fill space with big, free, fluid movements and fairly constant motion; they sometimes share amusing gestures like a secret code. They're strong, self-possessed, modest, pensive, never mean, and they attend to each other in complicated, family-like ways. We're invited to invent their circumstances and stories; the moves and patterns are clues.

In the post-show talkback, choreographer Selene Carter, who joined Wild Space at age 19 and currently teaches at the Indiana University Bloomington, spoke of an undervalued Midwest aesthetic different from

that of the coasts, based in a work ethic. “Our voice,” she said, “reflects a commitment to process and heart.” Loewen’s carefully structured work, in particular, constantly reveals the process of its making, as if it were improvised. She inspires dancers in rehearsal to create movements in response to agreed-upon ideas, then painstakingly shapes that material, adding music or not, into a multi-layered performance. Unsurprisingly, her dancers are often choreographers in their own right.

Carter’s splendid “Katherinette” was set to G.F. Handel’s 1707 aria “Il delirio amoroso.” Her Indiana dancers Suzanne Lappas and Stephanie Nugent turned a tale of unrequited love from Greek mythology into a sexy, funny, believably bewildered lesbian pursuit. Former Wild Space member Katie Sopoci Drake, now in Washington, D.C., reprised her “Clever Hominini” with Kraker dancing the role of the original co-creator Javier Marchan Ramos. They seemed fantastical water bugs, maybe in a mating ritual: seductive, lovely, inhuman.

Rodero and Schuchart were perfect in “Sound,” Susan Marshall’s thrilling portrait of devoted partnership. Kraker’s mercurial solo “Outer Dark” is simply outstanding; I’ll write more in connection with her planned solo concert this summer. Ex Fabula storyteller Tracy Lehrmann told an entertaining story well while dancer Angela Frederick embodied aspects of it. This good experiment needs more thought to fully cohere.