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March 15th, 2010 By HEATHER WISNER | News | Posted In: CLEAN UP, CLEAN UP

LIVE REVIEW: Katherine Longstreth at Conduit

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A new talent has joined Portland's contemporary dance scene: New Yorker **Katherine Longstreth**, who moved to Portland last summer with her family, brought together dancers from both coasts this weekend at **Conduit** in her program *Solos and Duets*.

This briskly paced show (mercifully free of the multiple intermissions that can drag evenings down) demonstrated Longstreth's facility for evocative and sculptural movement. Among the more arresting solos was *Life With Box*, which might have been subtitled "20 Uses for a Yoga Block." Set to Woody Guthrie and the White Stripes, plus environmental noises such as the thwoking of a ping-pong ball, it explored how a simple prop can alter movement and act as a kind of inert partner. Here, the box became a pillow, a mysterious package, even a ball and chain that hindered her steps. Using props in this way isn't new, but **Longstreth's space-carving movement and gentle syncopation made it memorable.**

Also fascinating was *High Seas, Wind Easing*, which Longstreth danced alone in white cotton pantaloons and a hoop skirt that, when she began spinning rapidly, spilled clear balloons across the floor. Eventually she released the skirt and tossed it aside, then swayed back and forth until the hoop swung up around her legs and waist in a surprisingly mesmerizing wave-like movement.

Longstreth had a strong collaborator in New Yorker Kelly Bartnik, with whom she danced the swaggering, cowboyish *Three to Get Ready*, and who showed off impressive upper body strength in the intense *AutoSolo*. Not all the pieces hung together quite as well. *Two for the Show*, a duet performed by Portland-based dancers Nancy Ellis and Joshua Thrower, was interesting for its intersection of sleepy pawing and sharp militaristic gestures, but ultimately didn't seem to go anywhere, despite capable performances by both dancers. That said, this program (simply but effectively lit by Mark LaPierre) bodes well for Longstreth's future collaborations with local artists.

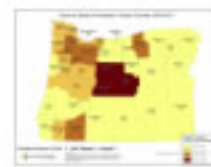
Photo: Katherine Longstreth in "High Seas Wind Easing." Photo by Stan Schnier.

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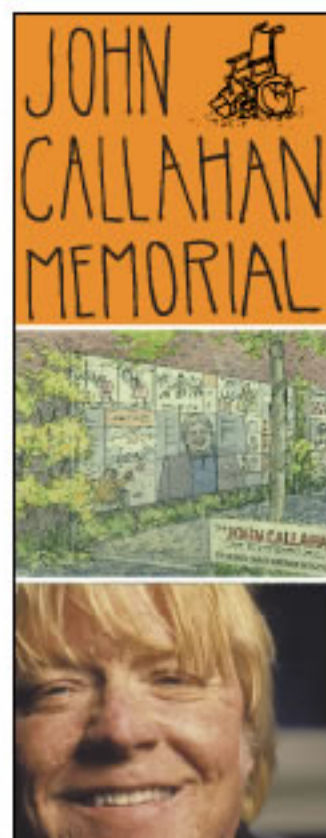
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