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## Transcending Form by John Byrne

By Deborah Wingert

Transcending Form, a new dance work by John Byrne is at Theater80, cool East Village art Theater. Mr. Byrne comes to choreography through his training from Julliard, School of American Ballet and North Carolina School of the Arts, as well as performing with Paul Taylor, Eric Hawkins and Patrick Corbin, to name a few. His work is narrative and earnest, eager to share his view.

Gina Figueroa, a singer, in a beaded evening gown the color of a latte, begins the piece with "Precious Lord", a spiritual, accompanied by Vincent Marra and Farrah Olieri. These dancers--he, softly curled and naked on the floor, she, in a white leggings and a trapeze top--portray two of the characters, Bambini and Holy Spirit. Bambini gets up to begin dancing and the Holy Spirit guides him in his movements and then gives him clothing ... purple tights. The following sections introduce more characters, Sue, Jim, Katie, Bobby, Francine, and JB, all presumably compilations of people from Mr. Byrnes life.

Each section has a title, "Dysfunction", "Before Love", "Ascend", and they are woven together to tell the drama, pain, euphoria, and education of a young man on his journey into adulthood. The choreography isn't formal, and the dancers are required to act, breathe, and show their expression more than dance. There are some interesting characters: a Mother/mentor played by Deborah Zalkind, a love interest- Rob Laqui, the beauty Soetkin Jacobs, and Jim-Ryan Braun, but the movement does not demonstrate much variety.

The earnestness with which Mr. Byrne tells his story make me want to know more and see him dance more. When he is onstage, naked in the final movement, he is strong, sensual and beautiful to watch. His lines are lovely and he moves with a feline grace and power. Stephen Petrilli, lights the stage, from the side, and the exposed brick of the theater's back wall is an excellent backdrop to the clothesline that runs across the stage. This clothesline becomes the gallery for the gossamer silk panels with photographs by the artist David LaChapelle. Hung with clothespins, the panels move aside to reveal the human counterpart to the art. It is a stunning visual moment and the one I remember most. EYE ON THE ARTS, NY – Deborah Wingert