

GOINGS-ON



WINDY CITY TIMES' ENTERTAINMENT SECTION



Photo by Oleg Volk

TAKING AIM

Marksman Chris Cheng has officially come out of the closet. Read more on page 21.

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Year in review: Chicago dance 2013

BY LAUREN WARNECKE

To say 2013 was a good year for dance is an understatement. Visitors dazzled with technical panache and theatricality, while our home-grown companies pushed themselves to work with new genres, push production values upward, and revisit old haunts. Below is a top 10 of 2013 at home (in no particular order), with three out-of-towners thrown in for good measure.

Best new work

—Episode 31: The Joffrey Ballet
Everything about Alexander Eckman's Episode 31 is exciting. Dressed in black and white, Joffrey's dancers are pushed outside their comfort zone, and pull it off amazingly. The process and product are entirely new for Joffrey, and Episode 31 becomes even more interesting when juxtaposed with November's full length *La Bayadere*. Premiered last August during the Chicago Dancing Festival, Episode 31 visits the Auditorium Theatre as part of Joffrey's winter program in February 2014, and is not to be missed.

—The Floating City: Kristina Isabelle
Chicago Dancemakers Forum Lab Artist Kristina Isabelle exploited every penny of her \$15,000 award in making *The Floating City*. Video, sound, lights, set and dance were beautifully calibrated in the evening-length exploration of "the muck" and "the middle."

—Cloudless: Hubbard Street Dance Chicago (HSDC)

A short new duet for two women sandwiched by bigger, flashier, full company works, *Cloudless* premiered as a part of HSDC's fall series. Uncharacteristically patient for resident choreographer Alejandro Cerrudo, *Cloudless* is elegant,

intimate, and simply beautiful.

Best remounts

—Monument: The Seldoms

Carrie Hanson and her company of wonderful Seldoms benefitted from the return of Christina Gonzalez-Gillett, as well as a revisit of the 2008 work *Monument* at Stage 773. A timeless eulogy on waste, *Monument* marked a pivotal shift in Hanson's process that has influenced more recent works.

—Cinderbox: Lucky Plush Productions

Cinderbox 2.0 impressively transformed the main space in Links Hall's new location, and featured an equally beefy cast of dancers (some of whom were returning from the original 2007 cast). The cheeky Julia Rhoads always manages to startle and surprise, even when you know the punchlines.

—One Thousand Pieces: Hubbard Street Dance Chicago

A remount of a 2012 work seems odd at first, but HSDC chose wisely in re-presenting its first evening-length effort from Cerrudo. *One Thousand Pieces* is a feat of technical magnificence—though it bears little resemblance to its inspiration (Marc Chagall's *America Windows*). The encore was presented just a few weeks ago for HSDC's Winter Series, and rightly so with its icy blue overtones and majestic fog curtain.

—The Rite of Spring: The Joffrey Ballet

Many Rites of Spring popped up throughout the year in tribute to the centennial of the Ni-jinsky ballet. The Joffrey opened its 2013-14 season with a program of "Russian Masters," but the true master was the reconstructed original choreography complete with authentic costum-ing and sets.



Joffrey Ballet's "Le Sacre du Printemps," part of its Russian Masters program. Photo by Herbert Migdoll

Best of the small-budget companies

—bully.punk.riot: BONEdance

Rumored to be a final curtain call for BONEdance, Artistic Director Atalee Judy created an immersive performance surrounding the theme of herding and crowd theory at the then new Links Hall space. Perhaps a memoir of Judy's life as a run-away teen embedded in the New York punk scene, *bully.punk.riot* revisited work from throughout her thirteen-year history, expertly sewn together to create a fun, cohesive experience.

—The Nexus Project

The two man show featuring Michel Rodriguez Cintra and Benjamin Wardell was a long time coming; coveted seats to the intimate performance in a Pilsen warehouse space were sold-out for all ten performances, and for good reason. Wardell, the brain-child of the project, crafted a choose-your-own-adventure show built from material provided by 12 duets set on the two men by 12 Chicago choreographers. In doing so, he completely dispels any assumptions about partnering and man on man duets.

—Rituals of Abundance and Lean Times: Peter Carpenter Performance Project

Peter Carpenter's ongoing mission explores the economic crisis and its impact on art. Parts nine and ten were presented at *Dance in the Parks* and on a double bill with *Same Planet Different World*, respectively, and appeared to be more about bringing transparency to the creative process than economic doldrums. Carpenter's comedic timing, use of text, and theatrical stylings are just three of the many things that make him brilliant.

Best out-of-towners

—Underland: Stephen Petronio Company

It feels like a long time ago that Stephen Petronio traversed down a scaffolding upstage at The Dance Center of Columbia College into his *Underland*. Much more than an exercise in the art of the quick change (though it was most certainly that), multiple viewings of *Underland* reveal its choreographic intricacy and deep connection to Nick Cage's ominous score.

—Story/Time: Bill T. Jones / Arnie Zane Dance Company

The highly anticipated return of Bill T. Jones / Arnie Zane Dance Company to Chicago was nestled amongst an impressive fall line-up at The Dance Center of Columbia College Chicago, who celebrates its 40th season this year. *Story/Time*, a Cunningham/Cage-inspired chance operation, navigates 70 stories in as many minutes narrated by the stoic Jones surrounded by granny smith apples. Each story is a page from Jones' diary, and exquisitely interpreted by the dancers with varying degrees of literacy.

—Having Words: Casebolt & Smith

You probably didn't see this, but it's definitely worth a mention. Los Angeles-based Liz Casebolt & Joel Smith are known for their dance theater duets—primarily because that is all they make. *Having Words* is a brilliantly constructed handshake dance for two dancers and an audience, built for *DanceWorks Chicago* and premiered by dancers Angela Dice Nguyen & Liv Schaffer at The Art of Partnering: Audience Architects' final Moving Dialogs series at the gorgeous Logan Center for the Arts in November.