

Byron Woods

February 28

Saw the premiere of [Helen Simoneau's "Leap"](#) at her company concert last night in Winston-Salem: an articulate contemporary/balletic duet set to a Bach harpsichord/violin duet.

Durham audiences can (and should) see this work Sunday afternoon, during [Mallarme Chamber Players'](#) concert at Duke, in Reynolds, at 3pm.

Thoughts, so far:

In most theater, we begin with the characters, relationships, situations and emotions; they arise from the script. In Helen's (and many other choreographer's) work, the movements come first. Only (much) later do the characters, relationships, situations and emotions emerge.

This intrigues me. To say the least. Does one predominant theatrical dynamic take artists from the concrete into abstraction? Does a different choreographic dynamic move from abstract movement toward the concrete?

Is a relationship as multifaceted as one we see here embedded in the movement, latent from the beginnings of the process, or is it brought to the movement by choreographer and movers?

[Ariel Friedman](#) and [Burr Johnson](#) were both so communicative during Helen's work. Their characters' relationship moves, several times, between a particular, disclosive delight (but, in my observation, not a "romantic" one) and passages more introspective.

There is much play between the two, much watchfulness (while one or both pretend they're not watching -- up to a point); and passages where there is no play at all. The Italo Calvino quote which frames the work in the playbill, concerning lightness. And the choreographic shout-out to John Donne's compass conceit.

And the meditation the work is on one or several particular kinds of love.

After all these years, it still floors me when a relationship this nuanced is enacted without one word being uttered on stage. It's one of the first reasons I fell in love with dance to begin with.

It was good to see [Helen Simoneau Danse's](#) sharp, overtly feminist "Paper Wings" again, after its ADF 2012 premiere. A group of 14 women (not including choreographer, not on stage) look an audience and a culture straight in the eye and say, "No further. We're dealing with this." (And, as [Lindsay Leonard](#) added in the after-show, "Wait. I wasn't finished yet.")

Uncompromising, manifesto movement from [Jasmine Hearn](#), [Maggie Knickerbocker](#), [Candace Scarborough](#), [Morgan Wallace](#), [Renée Colbert](#), [Hannah Darrah](#), [Rebekah Downing](#), [Breanne Horne](#), [Jenn Shin](#), [Meg Weeks](#), [Adriana Urueña](#), [Chu-Hua Wang](#), and [Zoe Warshaw](#).

Shivery.