

Helen Simoneau Danse at BAM Fisher
By Brian Seibert

In a concert of new and recent works by a fledgling choreographer, a gesture repeated in one than one piece can sometimes jump out as a potential key to the defining characteristics of an emerging voice. On Saturday at the Brooklyn Academy of Music's Fishman Space, when [Helen Simoneau](#) presented three works, the similar climaxes of the first two pieces had that effect.

The second selection, "the gentleness was in her hands," was the elder. In fact, it was the solo that first gained Ms. Simoneau attention in New York, when, in 2010, [it won first prize](#) in "The A.W.A.R.D. Show," a competition hosted by the Joyce Theater Foundation. Ms. Simoneau, a Canadian who has long lived in New York and a taut dancer with expressive eyes, reprised the solo herself. Stepping with tightly crossed legs, reaching around her back with one hand, closing her eyes to feel the air with her face, she suggested calm struggle, perhaps a reckoning with aging or illness.

Yet on Saturday what leapt out were the leaps near the end, as Ms. Simoneau repeatedly rolled and rose from a supine position to explode skyward. The motion was exciting, but it was also noticeable because it echoed the ending of the piece before it, "Paper Wings," in which the quick rolls from earth to air had been performed by ten women.

"Paper Wings" demonstrated Ms. Simoneau's developing skill with a group: how she can create overlapping waves and make individuals emerge from the many before merging back. A cast of varying experience exacerbated the training-flight quality of the work, and its thematic treatment of femininity as a role (girl-group primping contrasted with martial-arts attack) was diffuse in impact. But that final moment had the force of a pendulum, and gave the sense of a choreographer acquiring confidence.

And "among the newly familiar," the final and newest work, was the best. It benefitted from an excellent cast of six. Only the sly Candace Scarborough returned from "Paper Wings," and these more experience dancers, especially Burr Johnson and Ariel Freedman, conveyed Ms. Simoneau's ideas with greater authority.

But Ms. Simoneau's choreography, while still uneven, also seemed to be gaining authority. Ms. Freedman's solo was the high point of Ms. Simoneau's winding to unwind, yet more notable and welcome was a relaxed playfulness in duets and other interactions, a lovely sense of a newly assembled group of dancers enjoying one another's company. Even the idiosyncrasies were more convincing. When Ms. Scarborough joined the others in sitting down and holding on to one foot, it made sense in a Simoneau world.