

InfiniteBody

art and creative consciousness by Eva Yaa Asantewaa

Thursday, May 21, 2015

New dances by Bartosik and Crossman at Abrons Arts Center



Above and below:
Scenes from Kimberly Bartosik's *Ecsteriority4 (Part 2)*
(photos: Ryutaro Mishima)



In a human environment, propulsion--willed by the self or coerced by outside forces--means you're bound to stray through someone's airspace, run up against another body and do damage. [Kimberly Bartosik](#) creates that supercharged, contested, treacherous space in her world premiere ensemble, *Ecsteriority4 (Part 2)*, a trio for **Dylan Crossman**, **Melissa Toogood** and **Marc Mann**.

Crossman and Toogood, like Bartosik, had distinguished careers with Merce Cunningham. Guyana-born Mann has his own illustrious history, including Principal and Soloist roles in the Martha Graham Dance Company and work with Bill T. Jones and Susan Marshall. While handsomely sleek, nimble in force and timing, these three performers share a reckless drive in *Ecsteriority4 (Part 2)*. They are up for anything.

Roughly a half-hour in length, the piece takes full advantage of the dramatic confines of a small, spare

chamber, [Abrons Arts Center](#)'s Black Box Experimental Theater. Bartosik's audience should sense the desperate impact of bodies against walls and the risk of those bodies colliding with the Fourth Wall, too. Believe me, we do.

It opens with a slice of chaos. At first, houselights dim only slightly, leaving watchers exposed. Bartosik's torrential soundscape, much of it, could be songbird tweets on Fast Forward. Don't imagine that would sound pretty at all. To the keening sound, dancers thrash against the black backdrop, careen wild splashes of movement around the floor.

This action had already begun when, out of the corner of my eye, I noticed a person quietly close the door to the space, closing us in. The timing seemed oddly late but perhaps deliberate and had real psychological power.

Gaze at Toogood's face. Her eyes reflect vulnerability, apprehension, perhaps shock, even while she stays in motion. But she not only stays in motion, she survives and with unexpected aggression, red in tooth and claw. At one point, the dancers engage in staged combat without real contact; the air takes the kicks and blows. Crossman ends up on the ground with what appears to be two victors astride him, closely eyeing each other. Who will haul away the spoils?

In a scene near the end, Toogood's eyes lock onto Mann's, staring him down, literally; he backbends away from his overpowering competitor. Toogood then looms over Crossman and deftly strips the shirt from his torso. As Crossman, in particular, repeatedly discovers, there's no easy way to break or scale the wall that contains this dance's violence and furtive sexuality. Yet everything ends with a decisive choice made by each combatant.