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# boston uncomm

EDITED BY SUSANNE ALTHOFF

TAKING OFF

## Katherine Hooper

**WHY WE LOVE HER:** Because this contemporary dancer/choreographer crafts charged, large-scale pieces as thrilling and unpredictable as a summer lightning storm. **WHERE SHE'S BEEN:** "I loved mathematics as a kid," says the 31-year-old Hooper, who started dancing at age 3. "If you watch my dance, you'll see that my work is about designing space and numbers." Born and raised in Sherborn and now living in Ipswich, she holds a dance degree from the UMass-Amherst and formed BoSoma Dance Company with choreographer Irada Djelassi in 2003. **WHERE SHE'S GOING:** Once BoSoma presents an anticipated new work at CRASHarts' *Ten's the Limit* dance showcase in Cambridge next weekend, Hooper should shed her below-the-radar status. **HER MOTTO:** "I love being physical every day," says Hooper, who also works at the Cambridge Sports Club and teaches Pilates. "All my work is about promoting health and pushing the body to the limit." **PARTING SHOT:** "Bottom line, I want the Boston dance scene to explode. I want to see us on the same level as Chicago or New York within the next 10 years." —Rachel Strutt

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DANCE REVIEW

The Boston Globe

## Variety enlivens dance festival

By Karen Campbell, Globe Correspondent | November 7, 2009

Massachusetts Dance Festival aims to prove there's not only strength in numbers, there's vitality and a lot of diversity in our state's dance community.

Last night's inaugural concert showcased nine very different dance companies in a well-produced, smoothly paced production, with local television newswoman Susan Wornick providing the evening's introduction.

The most compelling works on the program were two large ensemble pieces, the first by the event's producers, BoSoma Dance Company. "Push," choreographed by BoSoma co-artistic directors Katherine Hooper and Irada Djelassi, was propelled by the rhythmic drive of Japanese drum troupe Kodo, and the piece for nine women was vigorously athletic and artistically sculptural, from slow-motion runs to angular leaps that twisted midair.

The dancers looked as if they were ready to explode at a moment's notice, moving with coiled intensity and kinetic pop through eye-catching patterns. Groupings came together and split apart in quick shifts through space.

Collage Dance Ensemble has made its mark with superb folk dances from around the world, so the opening large group tango of its work "Moments" was a stretch, and it showed. The dancers looked constrained, out of their element. Then the women traded their stilettos for character shoes, and we got what we came for: robust, full-bodied Balkan-inflected folk dance with brilliant footwork, high hitch kicks, stylish turns and swivels, and syncopated slaps, claps, and stomps.

The six dancers of Triveni Dance Ensemble, including artistic director Neena Gulati, offered a charming piece inspired by the temple dances of India. Despite some minor discrepancies, the dancers displayed flair, commitment, and fabulous attention to detail, from their raised eyebrows to the tips of their expressive fingers. Shoulders tilted, and their deeply arched postures canted and twisted above complex rhythmic sequences in the feet.

Though the flamenco and belly dance troupes had vivid costumes, the choreography and performance caliber offered by both Flamenco Dance Project and Snake Dance Theater were amateurish and stylistically pallid.

Sokolow Now! danced a solid reconstruction of "Session for Seven" by dance pioneer Anna Sokolow, and Chaos Theory Dance's Billbob Brown and Rebecca Nordstrom presented a sometimes clever but mostly rambling and silly piece about time. Veteran tappers Josh Hilberman and Thelma Goldberg offered an elegant routine that was thoroughly capable and professional but curiously restrained, uncharacteristically lacking imagination and personality.

Rainbow Tribe opened the evening with the jazzy, spirited "Lego Land," choreographed by Melissa Webster. The young dancers' energy and face-front sass helped set the evening's feel-good tone. ■

# Sidekick

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## BLOG REPORT

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DANCE

## Feeling the 'VIBE'

The BoSoma Dance Company explores the challenges of Boston living in its dance concert, "VIBE." Which makes us wonder if the dancers' inspiration comes from riding the T or going to the Filene's Basement wedding dress sale. Tonight at 8 and tomorrow at 3, the athletic ensemble presents the fall program, which combines old and new pieces. Special guest Eddy Ocampo from Chicago will also be showing off moves influenced by Tibetan and Filipino tradition. Tickets: \$25, \$20 for students and seniors. Tsai Performance Center, 685 Commonwealth Ave., 617-353-8725. [www.bu.edu/tsai](http://www.bu.edu/tsai) [June Wulff]

## PRESS REVIEWS

**The Boston Globe**

*by Karen Campbell*

Globe Correspondent | September 14, 2004

DANCE REVIEW

### **A SHARED SPOTLIGHT**

The weekend debut of Mass Motion Dance Company provided an excellent showcase not only for the choreography of its artistic directors, Katherine Hooper and Irada Djelassi, but for Collage Dance Ensemble, one of the area's leading folk dance troupes. It was a clever marketing stroke to invite the veteran company to share MMDC's first concert, both in terms of attracting a wider audience and in serving its mission for community outreach.

The pitfall, however, was that the internationally acclaimed **Collage** is a hard act to follow. Under the visionary leadership of Ahmet Luleci, the company's choreography infuses traditional movement with contemporary flair, and the first-rate dancers perform with vibrant energy, impressive precision, and heart. In the rousing "**Eastern Tides**," fusing dances from Spain, Hungary and Turkey, the dancers' terrific technical facility shone not only in the crisp footwork of high kicks and swivels, but also in seamless glides, gentle hop turns, and deep bends, arms stretching upward to the sky. Luleci gives the moving "**Balkan Blues**" a theatrical context, with dancers gathering as a community for a wake. He fluidly melds dance styles from different traditions while evoking a sense of ritual mourning and celebration. In a nice connection between the two companies, Hooper provided a vivid solo turn as the resurrected spirit, her brilliant spins and fluid undulations an effective contrast to the rhythmic urgency of the Collage dancers.

In comparison, the dancing and choreography of the fledgling MMDC paled a bit. Though there is some impressive individual talent and all the dancers displayed solid ability and enthusiasm, the ranks of the company are filled with students and recent graduates, which doesn't make for a particularly cohesive corps in the larger works, such as Hooper's high-energy octet "**Amygdala**" and Irada Djelassi's jazzy sextet "**Orcheisthai**." In addition, there was an annoying tendency to fade musical selections abruptly once the choreography ran its course, giving some of the works an underdeveloped, unfinished quality.

However, several of the dances had terrific promise. Hooper's "**Passing Known**" was especially striking. Irada Djelassi and Geniene Maybruch began in independent corridors of light with simple walks that progressed to bold, sweeping gestures interrupted by moments of stillness. Light also transformed her engaging "**De Tatch**," as Kristen Duffy, Melissa Ham-Ellis, and Christina Straight created layers of taut, sharply etched phrases within "boxes" of light. Shelbia Djelassi gave a committed, muscular performance of Hooper's "**Breathe**," combining loose-limbed swagger with jackknife leaps and expansive turns.

## FLUID MOVEMENTS

by dp

If you read my articles regularly, you are no doubt aware that I have stated, in no uncertain terms, that I can dance. I can shake my hips, spin around, do the hokey-pokey...you name it. That said, there is another kind of dancing that, well, I'm not so sure I can pull off. It involves years of practice, study and dedication. Many, if not all, endure years of schooling, and even upon graduating and making it into dance troupes of national or even world renown, continue to study and expand upon their seemingly inexhaustible well of talent. These are professional dancers; be they ballet, contemporary, experimental, etc., they have dedicated themselves to the singular purpose of dance in all its beauty and power. This week we'll take a look at a few companies that expand Boston's artistic horizons through the fluid and universal language of dance.



BoSoma's Performance of  
*Velocity*



Now, when I say I can dance, I say so in deferential terms to those that either A. truly know the difference between the "primary beat" and the "secondary beat" when shaking their tokhes (Pronounced: [tuh cuss] Derivation: Yiddish. Definition: rear end, buttocks, butt), and B. those who make it their profession. These artists do so by creating spectacles for others to witness; by dedicating countless hours a day fine tuning their craft (kind of like I do with my writing...No, seriously, that wasn't a joke), and finally by employing ethereal movements to tell a story, create an emotive landscape and communicate with the audience. Boston has numerous dance companies that make up a large part of our cultural and artistic landscape. Right now I'm going to narrow our focus and look at three that might not be on your dance card calendar, but most definitely

should be.

In my experience, when you mention the words "Contemporary Dance" to people, one of two things happen to their eyes: they either roll or glaze over. Dance, unfortunately, can be thought of as inaccessible, and when you add the perceived taboos inherent in a word like "contemporary," people have a hard time moving beyond their comfort zones. Well, I'm here to tell you the time has come, dear friend, and the Snappy Dance Theater is going to make your initiation seamless, painless and, you heard it here first...fun. Founded in 1997, Snappy Dance has over its ten year life become *the* contemporary dance company in not only Boston, but Massachusetts on the whole. By employing an artistic dance palette of gymnastics, theatrical dance, martial arts, and circus showmanship, Snappy Dance aims to create visually stunning pieces that are also accessible to the audience. Through both movement and aesthetic artistry, Artistic Director Martha Mason creates an experience that appeals to all our senses by employing elements that make us think *and* laugh, and there's nothing inaccessible about that.

So let's say you *know* contemporary dance. You can testify on high that it's righteous and you want

# BoSoma, 'VELOCITY2' up to speed

E11

During the day, Katherine Hooper is the general manager of a health club. Much of her remaining time is spent as co-artistic director of BoSoma Dance Company. Inevitably, the two jobs have become intertwined.

"At the club," she said by telephone from the company's studio in Allston, "I'm working con-

away amazed. That is so rewarding to me."

Formerly known as Mass Motion Dance Company, BoSoma dance had a big success last year at the Tsai Center with "VELOCITY2," presented in conjunction with Collage Dance Ensemble. Both companies return to Boston University this weekend with "VELOCITY2" at the new Dance Theater on Buick Street. The program features several premieres and dances recently presented around the nation.

Hooper and Djelassi each bring distinct experience to the artistic direction of the company, feeding its collective and multicultural form of expression. Djelassi has a strong background in the techniques of Martha Graham and Lester Horton. Hooper has studied kinesiology and thinks like a mathematician.

"As a child, my studies were not detailed in the equations of mathematics and the hierarchy of mathematics, but my brain functions that way," Hooper said. "When I look out into the world, when I listen to music, when I see movement, the design of num-

bers and the design of space with numbers is very clear and natural to my being as an artist. I enjoy the struggle that dancers go through in rehearsal and performance working with the numbers in space, and within the music and the design."

Djelassi gets inspiration just looking out the window of their studio.

"I'm in love with the human body, how it moves and what you can do with it," she said. "I'm fascinated watching people walk down the street and seeing how different people move, the quality of their stride."

Like Graham, she believes every movement begins somewhere deep in the mind.

"Whether you're going into the psychology of Jung or Freud, the movement always originates somewhere in there," Djelassi said. "But that doesn't mean that I pick a story or make a dance about my last bad relationship. I don't believe in doing that."

Her newest dance is titled "Mana Ella," and it centers on the power and development of strength in women. It starts with

a piece of traditional American Indian music and finishes with Asian techno.

"I wanted music with a consistency of female voices in it. It starts at a primitive level and ends somewhere more contemporary," she said.

Hooper will premiere "The Challenge," set to music she described as "dynamic in nature" and ranging from vocal Arabic to driving percussion to fluid saxophone solos. Her musical tastes are vast, however, and another of her dances on this weekend's program is choreographed to Vivaldi.

Both women say they've been highly inspired by Ahmet Luteci, artistic director of Collage.

"They represent the cultural gamut," Hooper said. "And also they bring in the local Turkish audience, people who might never have attended a modern dance concert."

BoSoma Dance Company, at Dance Theater on Buick Street, Boston. For tickets to performances tonight and tomorrow night, \$18-\$22, call 617-562-0550 or go to [www.bosoma.org](http://www.bosoma.org)

## Dance

THEODORE BALE

stantly with people who are struggling or excelling with body image or with pushing the body to the next level. I want to open dance up to them, and maybe also to people who would never think to set foot in a dance venue."

The company's other artistic director, Irada Djelassi, shares that goal.

"Some people just love modern dance," she said. "But 90 percent of the people I've talked to just shrink when they hear the word 'modern.' Even some people in the dance world are suspicious of modern dance. But everyone I've been able to convince to come to one of our shows has walked



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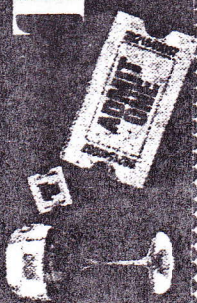
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