

Showcase presents dance and performance, locally made

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The “Right Here Showcase” offers a welcome venue for Twin Cities artists who deserve to be seen.



Last Friday evening, when downtown [Minneapolis](#) was teeming with Garth Brooks fans pumped up for a big show, a few quieter souls ventured into the James Sewell Ballet Tek Box at the Cowles Center to see the new Right Here Showcase organized by Paul Herwig of the performance troupe Off-Leash Area. Dedicated to promoting local artists, the mini-festival makes good on its promise while also offering up some interesting work. It continues this weekend with a different lineup of performers.

Puppeteer Bart Buch and choreographer Deborah Jinza Thayer shared the Friday program (butoh performer Gadu performed Saturday and Sunday). Buch’s “Mortal City” really exemplified Herwig’s premise. A longtime member of In the Heart of the Beast Puppet and Mask Theatre, Buch brought a simple yet poignant approach to his artistry. Using a set consisting of cardboard boxes, Buch and Seth Eberle created a small metropolis lying under a blanket of ice and snow. Two male puppets huddled together, seeking warmth and companionship.

Buch and Eberle imbued their handheld puppets with humanity and while not a great deal happened, the show effectively demonstrated the passage of time even as it feels suspended. “Mortal City” proved that storytelling doesn’t need to be flashy to make a point.

Thayer’s “Diana Takes a Swim” has a tragic back story. Two years ago Thayer was set to premiere the work at Red Eye when a car accidentally hit her and a friend while they sat on a cafe patio, injuring both. On Friday, Thayer finally brought “Diana” to its full and rich realization.

Like Buch, Thayer is skilled at playing with time. The first half of the work is a solo for her and she moves deliberately through different emotional states, using her dress with a 30-foot train as everything from mermaid tail to toreador’s cape, with Janika Vandervelde’s ambient composition evoking a seaside environment. Thayer’s movements ranged from the sensual to the crone-like — and then she was gone, replaced by four women who continued the internal journey. Thayer never returned, which deprived the work as a whole of some continuity.

Right Here continues Friday with a rotating schedule of performances featuring Kym Longhi, Rosy Simas and Vanessa Voskuil. A donation provides admission to both shows and the website provides more information about each night’s artist lineup.

Caroline Palmer writes about dance.