

Impro Lab: Transparencies



Tony Yap, Yumi Umiumare. Photos - Mayu Kanamori

Written by Stephanie Glickman
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Improvisational dance performance is often more challenging for audiences than performers. Viewers need a great deal of patience, as they wait for the resonating moments when performers, sound, and visuals unite in mesmerizing synergies.



Left - Jim Denley, Tony Yap.

Fortyfivedownstairs launched its new performance space with just such collaboration. **Impro-Lab Transparencies** is an improvisation-based project initiated by Sydney based **Tess de Quincey**. It has already had incarnations in Sydney and Japan and now it comes to Melbourne.

It brings together physical performers **Tony Yap**, who is interested in Asian trance dance and Butoh, **Yumi Umiumare**, a Butoh and cabaret artist, **Peter Fraser** and **Tess De Quincey**, both Body Weather practitioners, with video artist **Samuel James**, vocal poet **Amanda Stewart**, instrumentalist/composer **Jim Denley** and keyboardist **Chris Abrahams**. Individually, all artists are highly evolved and sitting in the top caliber of their respective fields. Putting them together in an improvisational context is an ambitious and worthwhile endeavor. Of course, results will vary from performance to performance, depending on the energies of the evening.

On opening night, the four dance performers remained more in their own zones than in a cohesive expressive whole. I felt their physical energies did not often mesh and there was a struggle to find common points of kinesthetic interplay. They occasionally found these inspired points but it took quite a long time for them to unfold and they mostly remained as points, or moments, rather than extended explorations.

In the cavernous, warehouse space **Yap** opened the piece, with subtle hand and arm flickerings. **Umiumare** shuffled and slithered on the other side of the space, alternating between demure curiosity and maniacal frenzy. **Fraser**, with his tall, thin frame slowly walked back and forth across the room. When **De Quincey** eventually appeared, barely moving at all, her presence was nearly lost amidst the other action.

It was more the aural textures and **James's** video component that brought the piece together. **Umiumare**, knocking on the ground, **Denley's** gargling noises that echoed from his saxophone, layered with **Stewart's** vocalizing and **Abrahams's** mix of wind, rain, and beeping ambient sounds sustained a synergy that I did not see in the movement. **James** often overlapped video images of the performers with abstracted backdrops in affecting ways. His black and white projections, on two perpendicular walls honed in the space as well as captured and enlarged physical nuances that might otherwise have gone unnoticed.

Like all improvised performance that relies on the inspiration of the moment, **Impro-Lab:Transparencies** will have a different feel each time it is played out. Within the cast, there is no shortage of artistic depth and experience, all of which has infinite potential for engaging expression.

Impro-Lab: Transparencies

Presented by De Quincey Co and Machine for Making Sense

Venue: Fortyfivedownstairs

Dates: 8-11 March 2007

Times: Thursday - Saturday 8pm; Sunday 5pm

Tickets: \$25 / \$18

Bookings: 9662 9966