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Miami Light Project's experiments in motion, sound

By Guillermo Perez
Special Correspondent

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What do you get when you cross tap with hip-hop? Tip-top, surely -- as in Ico Manzanero's dance piece *What?!?*. Participating in Miami Light Project's Here & Now, a showcase of works commissioned from local talent, this choreographer-performer brought a striving for new form to the Light Box Studio on Saturday.

Though street culture, with graffiti art and electronic blasts in attendance, energized Manzanero's piece, he was just as attuned to the *clave*, the beat pattern that drives a lot of Latin music. In developing his narrative about latter-day Little Rascals, he also drew from sources such as silent films and TV skits in clever interaction with projected images. Manzanero's footwork is not subtle -- going for the hard-heeled, toe-stubbing approach. But, despite some clunky transitions and a solemn-tag ending (memorializing those who have fallen by the wayside), *What?!?* lent gruff voice -- here ironically funny, there bittersweet -- to the championing of humanity at the margins.

Natasha Tsakos unleashed a surge of sound effects in *Up Wake* part II, to accompany an androgynous character with blue-streaked hair, a silvery pallor and a suit from some chic intergalactic boutique. Multimedia here bolstered mime artistry as projected factoids and other graphics laid a trail -- sometimes a snare -- for Tsakos, portraying both wide-eyed wanderer and agenda-driven sprinter.

A week earlier at the same venue Kristin O'Neal, Ana González, and choreographer Joanne Barrett danced in *Milhojas Separated*, suggesting layers of experience and parallel lives through different tasks. Deeper connection, or at least a shared response to a sound collage, was relegated to fancier passages. Focused movers, these women applied breath and muscle to signal urgency or to bask in rapturous moments. Some passages were arresting, yet the multiple perspectives and cryptic imagery needed better development to sharpen their metaphorical points.

Octavio Campos revealed consummate showmanship in the dance-theater work *IPO: The Bored Room*. His *Initial Public Offering* lampooned the merging of art with corporate culture by staging a meeting to hustle potential investors (the audience) in the launching of a product (a pleasure device standing for artwork, but even the anatomy of the artist was for sale, if that's what the market clamored for).

A stream of video imagery on large screens perked up proceedings, from product development to publicity. Whizzing back and forth, acolytes in tow, Campos ranged from unctuous to vicious: here a kitten meowing for our money; there a Doberman barking out orders at assistants. With the creative act becoming a commodity and ownership supplanting aesthetic experience, neither art nor commerce emerged as guiltless partners.

*Guillermo Perez is a Miami-based freelancer and critic for Dance Magazine.
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