

## WRNI July 21st - Bill Gale Review

For five years now, Island Moving Company has brought in dance groups from all over the country to Newport; then IMC goes to their home towns to perform. Bill Gale says this summer's production is one well worth seeing.

You know it's no easy thing to run a small but professional dance company. Fund-raising is constant and communication with other companies sometimes almost non-existent. That's why Island Moving's idea to trade locations with other companies is such a good thing. It allows a small but efficient troupe to not only travel the nation but brings dancers, choreographers and administrators together in what can sometimes be a kind of singular business.

This summer's Great Friends Dance Festival in Newport brings companies from Florida and New York City. And it means Island Moving will be, ah, moving once again to other venues, new audiences.

The program began with the appearance of the Surfscapes Contemporary Dance Theatre out of Daytona Beach Florida. Their first piece was a duet, soft and easy, careful movement professionally executed. An easy start to an evening that had some harder-edged works.

One of those was another Surfscapes piece by artistic director Rachael Leonard. Three women, one man appeared, quickly squaring off into a four-sided box. They move into that box and snap out again. The music sizzles, sounding sometimes like an electric cord sparking. Individual dancers moved into the center and then quickly backed out. It was a rough-edged piece, with no discernible theme but with feeling, perhaps desire unfulfilled.

From New York, the Matthew Westerby Company continued the almost warlike theme. The driving, mechanical music grinded away, rising, lowering pulsating. The four dancers, two females, two males, gave no real hint of specific action or needs. But the feeling was – this is just one man's idea – that something had gone very wrong. All was about to be lost.

The Westerby company followed that with two movers including the choreographer himself who presented a male and female in wary conflict. Blank-faced, they moved and circled, ending back to back. No hope here either.

Another New York Company, Lydia Johnson Dance, was more upbeat. Dancers in little black dresses caroused and became serious. Near the end there was a wonderful duet and all was pure dance.

Island Moving contributed three dances. Artistic director Miki Ohlsen's work was fast and fun filled with vibrant force and had no conclusion, which seemed just fine.

Associate artistic director Spenser Gavin Hering brought an antidote to the serious outlook of some of the dances. There was pulsating music for two dancers and all of it was good fun. His last piece had seven movers in sparkling black. Again, pure dance and good fun.

The great Friend festival continues this week with Island Moving and Surfscapes returning joined by companies from Providence, and New York.

And, oh yes, if you go you will see what IMC calls an “etude.” Each day a choreographer and dancers have just two hours to form a dance that will be presented that evening. The result is three or four minutes of something brand new, created for that night and that night only. It's something else that makes this dance festival different maybe even unique.

Great Friends Dance Festival continues through Saturday at Island Moving Company in Newport. Bill Gale reviews the performing arts for Rhode Island Public Radio.