

# COAL HILL REVIEW

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## Dance Review: Private Places by IdiosynCrazy Productions

*December 18, 2012 by admin ·*

*Reviewed by Adrienne Totino*

Philadelphia based dance company, IdiosynCrazy, shook up the local contemporary dance scene this past weekend in their hilarious and haunting new work, “Private Places.”

Audience members gathered in the lobby of the Alloy Studios, much like travelers huddled around the entrance gate to an airplane. The piece was inspired by just that – the inside of an airline cabin. Not only was Artistic Director, Jumatatu Poe, interested in people who work in tight, enclosed spaces, but also how flight attendants in particular are trained in “emotional management.”

We’ve all heard stories of passengers losing their cool; maybe we’ve even witnessed it. And we’ve seen the calm, but strange smiles on the faces of the flight attendants taught to deal with such outbursts. Think of the Saturday Night Live airline skit from the early 90’s – David Spade and Helen Hunt as disgruntled attendants, rushing passengers out with a snarky “Bye-Bye.”

The eight performers of IdiosynCrazy took that idea about one hundred steps further, deeply investigating human relationships and what might happen if psychological madness ensued during a regular commercial flight.

Each audience member was assigned a letter – A, B, C or D – which indicated our seating during the performance. Three dancers greeted us in the lobby, with the kind of insincere smiles that indicate something boiling underneath. One group at a time, they ushered us to our seats.

The third floor studio was transformed into an airline cabin. A long, rectangular space was enclosed by large plastic sheets. Movable chairs were lined up in four rows. Dancers sat us individually, with a blank stare that sometimes lingered a bit too long. We waited and watched, as others were greeted and sat in the same peculiar manner.

Right away, the neuroses of the performers developed. In a robotic tone, three dancers circled each other maniacally, repeating the phrase “Do you need anything from me?” Others moved about as if drugged, making strange sounds one would imagine hearing in the hallways of a mental institution. Another trio danced a slow unison phrase of overly sexual movement.

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Poe was inspired by a dance form called J-Setting, a club culture that pushes boundaries of masculinity and femininity, and is popular in the gay community.

All of this happened in the small aisle space in between seating, to the lulling tic-tock sound of a metronome. Dancers bullied audience members, asking them to get up and move, and invading their personal space. Somehow it was funny, and the group of us were willing to go along for the ride.

As the piece continued, the dancers appeared to be breaking down emotionally, moaning, crying and shouting. The physical and sexual barriers continued to fall away. Costumes came off, revealing bare breasts and bottoms. And in an escalation of fury, the entire cast came together and stripped completely.

The revelation was slow enough that we didn't feel like voyeurs. Perhaps it was because the disorder was well underway when we arrived. We were invited into it. By the end, we certainly had more questions than answers. But for reasons I'm not even sure of, the whole thing made sense. Maybe in our own "private places," we can relate to the chaos in this crazy world.



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P.O. 60100

Pittsburgh, PA 15211

412.381.4261

Christine Stroud, Editor

cstroud@autumnhouse.org

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