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IMPRESSIONS OF: Jumatatu Poe and Jesse Zaritt's "More Mutable Than You"

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By Erin Bomboy

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Published on October 18, 2015

Photo by Scott Shaw

A Blind Date in Artistic Collaboration

Created and Performed by Jumatatu Poe and Jesse Zaritt

Sound Design by Llain Jackson (with looped material from Me'Shell Ndegeocello)

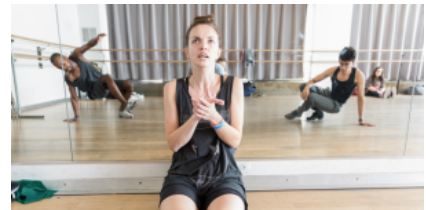
Additional Music by Rihanna and Journey

Lighting Design by Haejin Han

"I want to escape the fixed-ness of my self, somehow become *more* and *other* than who I think." (For Jumatatu, from Jesse)

Here's one way to do this: Start making work with someone you're

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here's one way to do this. Start making work with someone you've never met. Three and a half years ago, Jumatatu Poe and Jesse Zaritt did just that. Without meeting each other, they dove into an artistic collaboration. If *More Mutable Than You* at Gibney Dance's Agnes Varis Performing Arts Center is any indication, they seem to be enjoying it.



Jumatatu Poe; Photo by Scott Shaw

The piece opens with an arresting image: In the voids between a trio of columns, Poe and Zaritt stand — forcefully, almost combatively — clasping curled yellow streamers that resemble clumps of Rapunzel's hair. They bounce and prance and whirl the ribbons like militant cheerleaders.

Performing alternating solos, the two begin a gradual, and then abrupt, abandonment of formalism. Poe lopes and skitters on his toes while Zaritt cuddles a column and arcs into vooa poses. An

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insistent score urges them to "Just do it!" and "Make the dreams come true!" Later, they dance in silence, the only sound a chirped command, "Activity completed," which is issued from a phone that dangles like a coach's whistle from the non-dancing person's neck.



Jesse Zaritt and Jumatatu Poe (underneath); Photo by Scott Shaw

This supple, captivating duo manifests motion as a wild and unstudied riff on floor rolls and inversions and pacing. Poe's a loosey-goosey mover: With billowing joints, his limbs imprint indolent slash marks in the air. Zaritt's a technical powerhouse, both a blessing and a curse. Each action shimmers with impressive clarity, yet as he flings his body in a series of leaps (the kind little kids do when imitating a ballerina), he can't quite escape the tension of his training. Poe and Zaritt's acute fairness in sharing space but splitting time makes this less a duet and more a dialogue, the body explaining what words cannot.

Poe and Zaritt seem like smart, thoughtful guys. It's easy to picture them exchanging long, contemplative emails and conversing passionately about their preoccupations — queerness and heroism. How this is manifested physically, how we're supposed to respond to their discourse, becomes fuzzy as the piece veers into a jumbled duet of inchoate impulses and images that never accumulate into something substantial. They preen like burlesque dancers to Rihanna, take on and off their tops and short shorts, and scatter the yellow ribbons until the floor resembles a straw-strewn barn. Here and there, the action pauses as they slump against each other like two boxers in a middle of a grueling match.



Jumatatu Poe (L) and Jesse Zaritt (R); Photo by Scott Shaw

It increasingly feels that *More Mutable Than You* is by them, for them, about them. A searing, penultimate motif — the two walking hand in hand, Zaritt's head bowed, Poe's obscured by a bird's nest of streamers — underscores the point. We're eavesdroppers on their conversation, an exchange that's sometimes interesting, sometimes baffling, and largely, not for us.

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