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### **DANCE REVIEWS**

## **Flashing light, looping beats, and more at Dancing on the Edge opening weekend**

by [Janet Smith](#) on July 8th, 2018 at 11:28 AM

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- Dab Dance Project's *Bombberman* played out in a cube that looked like it had been Saran Wrapped.OK SANG HOON
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### **At the Firehall Arts Centre on Friday, July 6. The Dancing on the Edge festival continues until July 14**

For its opening weekend, Dancing on the Edge quite fittingly took us to the outer limits of what the form can be.

The adventures in dance included an exciting, ever-looping new work in progress from Company 605 and a haunting, genre-challenging vision from Montreal's Lara Kramer.

The Edge One double bill launched with a surreal and darkly comic appearance by young South Korean trio Dab Dance Project. *Bombberman* opened with the flash of fluorescent, light-sabre-like rods blinking inside the stifling, plastic-wrapped cube the dancers would perform in.

The transparent cube was supposed to symbolize global pollution—our "environment in quarantine". Inside it, the dancers morphed from robotic moves set to high-tech bleeping to organic, yogic sculptural forms. At one point, they conjured a multi-limbed god; at another, their intertwined arms joined into shifting heart shapes.

While references like the latter were a bit literal, the work was fun, accessible, and, most of all, different. Choreographer Hoyeon Kim found a unique language that melded street style with contemporary. The ending, with the plastic steamed up from their workout, and one dancer finally breaking through the membrane, was the highlight.

Company 605 served as a good compliment, influenced as it is by similar street moves and club beats, but taking those inspirations to a highly sophisticated, and much more virtuosic level of contemporary-dance play.



Company 605.DAVID COOPER

In the work choreographed by Lisa Gelley and Josh Martin, five dancers seemed to ride the looping, yet ever-shifting currents sent out by the two sound-mixing boards that they monkeyed with intermittently on-stage, layering the driving beats. Patterns circled in on each other and morphed, the dancers often casually talking to each other about what they were doing. The effect put us inside the creation process while it was unfolding—almost like a meta look at the repetition and rehearsal a work of art takes. At one point, two dancers discussed how they could "calm" their partnering movement as they did it, one commenting "it's hard to improve it when you're in it".

As the work looped, there were recurring actions that went beyond pure choreography: over and over, dancer Sophia Wolfe would return to a bench and snap a Polaroid of the others as they moved, all while rolling a ball under one foot.

The movement was so loose, it was easy to overlook the extreme technical skill and complexity of what was going on. The overall effect was hypnotic and dizzying—a clever live embodiment of the kind of layering, repetition, and sampling you hear in electronic music.

The piece's working title is *Loop, Lull*; watch for its premiere.

Elsewhere on the roster, Kramer's *Windigo* provided a contrast to the more choreographic pieces on the program, delving ever closer to pure performance art than she did in the fest's 2014 showing, *NGS* ("*Native Girl Syndrome*").

Kramer appeared on-stage at a sound board, live-editing a score that shifted from crickets to water rushing—sounds gathered from Ontario's Far North, where her mother's reserve is—sometimes weaving in the voices of small children talking about monsters. (Windigo, or wendigo, is a man-eating beast from Indigenous mythology that's often associated with insatiable greed.)

Meanwhile, dancers Peter James and Stefan Petersen used pocket knives to cut open and crawl into the mattresses laying about the stage. At one startling point, Petersen even appeared to cut out a chunk to chew and swallow it. At other points, the men stuffed items from a junk pile at the back of the stage into it.

Inspired by her own Oji-Cree heritage, Kramer uses the violence inflicted on the mattresses to symbolize the violence perpetrated against Indigenous peoples and their land. But that trauma is not carried out on-stage in a frenetic flurry; instead it's a slow, painful process, punctuated by long pauses of boredom when the two men loll and lie lifeless on their "beds". That tone takes you very close to the sense of despair, pointlessness, and weariness that plagues northern First Nations after generations of oppression, isolation, and residential schools.

What's also striking for Vancouver viewers are the inevitable associations with the Downtown Eastside: the trash pile evokes a Main-and-Hastings back alley; the men can't help but remind you of the lost, homeless souls you see there.

The effects are profound and disturbing, and sometimes utterly surreal and existential: at one point, James bounces a pink-furred, springed toy bunny slowly around the stage in what feels like an eternity—an absurd and eerie evocation of the listlessness of lost hope.

Even though *Dancing on the Edge* is hitting the middle age of 30 years, programming like this makes it clear it's still a rebellious teen at heart—providing a glimpse into the kind of indie work you don't get the chance to see elsewhere on the Vancouver arts calendar.