

NEW UNIVERSITY



DIGITAL EDITION

[The Wooden Floor Brings the Beat](#)

[Connie Ho](#) | [Jun 13, 2011](#) |

Martha Graham is the mother of modern dance. She broke with tradition, paving a way for dancers who may not necessarily have found a way to express themselves in either ballet or musical theater. Her movement has trickled to campus with modern dance performances by the Wooden Floor, a local non-profit dance studio.

Based in Santa Ana, the Wooden Floor provides a number of support services for low-income youth such as dance education and performance opportunities, academic support and college prep programs, and mentoring and enrichment programs.

From Thursday, June 2 to Saturday, June 4, the Wooden Floor, previously known as Saint Joseph Ballet, presented “TRUE,” an annual concert of artistic collaborations that was held at the Irvine Barclay Theatre. This year’s program featured work by a number of renowned modern dance choreographers and students of all ages.

The afternoon began with a piece called “Too,” which focused on 23 individual solos. The piece was incredibly dramatic, draped in somber shades of gray at some moments and then livelier hues of orange, green and purple at other moments. The choreographer utilized partner work throughout the various points of the piece and the steady pace of the choreography was paired with the instrumental music. It was a bit of a slow beginning but started to become more engaging during the second piece.

The second piece, “True or False: I was born in the Netherlands,” explored the different perceptions and identities of the dancers. The choreographer, Melanie Ríos Glaser, was able to talk to the dancers and create a piece that showed snippets of their daily lives, highlighted pop culture, and mimicked the way the dancers interacted with one another. It was interesting to watch the social commentary that Ríos Glaser was creating, pinpointing the stereotypes that many minorities face.

One of the statements that stood out was, “We are all Mexicans,” directly addressing the issue of the fact that the company is largely made up of dancers of Latino heritage. Another statement,

“People look at me like I can’t afford the clothes,” shows the anxiety young adults may feel when they walk into a store and are neglected due to ageism. This piece had a certain poignancy to it as well, drawing on emotional stories that pull on the heartstrings. One girl stated, “My mom had me when she was 16 and she regrets it.” With statements like this, it’s hard not to look at the dramatic side that the piece delves into.

Apart from the various emotional elements, I enjoyed seeing that the piece was a verbal piece, combining statements and songs together. The dancers created the music themselves, shouting statements of true and false throughout the piece while also humming some popular melodies from Lady Gaga and rappers from the past.

Apart from the verbal portions of the piece, another creative aspect was the use of props. To continue to promote the various messages of this piece, Ríos utilized signage to give a distinct image – some signs addressed issues like “Global Warning,” while others were more humorous in nature like “Kids Should Vote Yes.” This humor was seen in other props like a mustached guinea pig.

The last piece of the afternoon was titled “Pieces of Wood” and drew from the element of live music performed by the Los Angeles Percussion Quartet. The piece began with a group of dancers standing in front of the stage in a line and wearing blue Lycra clothing. They began clapping a beat and variations of the beat repeated. This clapping rhythm continued throughout the piece, and it was great to see the choreography flow with the beat.

The choreographer, John Heginbotham, really utilized the space well. His choreography spanned throughout the stage and the floor work was mixed in with simple movement.

There was a great use of transitions as well in addition to a sense of continuity from the beginning to the end of the piece. The lightning and costume design complimented the clapping beat with lively, bright hues like white and blue. It was truly entertaining to watch and incredibly captivating. This piece was by far my favorite and it was a great way to end the performance.

Overall, I would encourage other dance lovers to attend a performance by the Wooden Floor. The choreography is enlightening and thought-provoking. It may be difficult at first to grasp the concepts, as much of choreography is modern dance. However, the organization is so passionate about helping their students learn through the art of dance that the viewer can’t help but enjoy the performance as well.