

NEWS

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WALKER ART CENTER AND SOUTHERN THEATER PRESENT NEXT GENERATION OF PROMINENT TWIN CITIES CHOREOGRAPHERS IN MOMENTUM: NEW DANCE WORKS



Momentum 2008 artists (clockwise from top left): Chris Schlichting, Maia Maiden (right) and Ellena Schoop, Eddie Oroyan, and Anna Marie Shogren
 Photos: Cameron Wittig

Minneapolis, June 20, 2008—The Walker Art Center and the Southern Theater present the annual Momentum series, illuminating the skill and passion of the next generation’s most promising artists Thursday–Saturday, July 17–19 and 24–26, at 8 pm at the Southern Theater. Featuring two companies each evening, the much-anticipated Momentum 2008 includes performances by Chris Schlichting, Maia Maiden and Ellena Schoop, Eddie Oroyan, and Anna Marie Shogren. Each company will present new work commissioned by the Walker and the Southern with the support of the Jerome Foundation. The Southern Theater is located at 1420 Washington Avenue South, Minneapolis. A postshow discussion follows each Friday performance.

Momentum: New Dance Works

Thursday–Sunday, July 17–19, 8 pm
Chris Schlichting; Maia Maiden and Ellena Schoop
 \$18 (\$14 Walker/Southern members)
 Postshow discussion on Friday

Chris Schlichting: *love things*

For Chris Schlichting, exploring the definitions of dance is as much the point as developing the choreography itself.

“I started dance training after college and felt at a loss for how to embrace dance technique,” he says. “But I found a lot of sources in contemporary work, this pedestrian work—the movement that happens in our daily lives—and it got me exploring this idea of ‘What is dance?’”

Schlichting mixes an eclectic background with an elusive aesthetic that belies easy classification. He came to dance first as a break-dancer and



Chris Schlichting, *love things*
Photo: Cameron Wittig

through the resurgence of swing dance in the late 1990s. He later joined Ethnic Dance Theater, which focuses on traditional folk steps, and at the same time soaked up a lot of the experimental contemporary work happening in the Twin Cities. Schlichting has performed with past Momentum artists Hijack, Morgan Thorson, and Justin Jones.

In *love things*, Schlichting presents movements almost as scenarios, drawing on childhood references to movement—televised or theatrical musicals, among others—and reinventing them through contemporary movement. Throughout the piece, he beckons the audience to consider the intersection of ballet with “pedestrian forms.” His bridge to history extends to the music, rooted in “airy, electronic fantasy elements, this synth quality, this faraway guitar sound—this very packaged sound.”

“The work begins from a kinetic place. It is thinking through our dance histories, thinking about the movement as a conversation and how it speaks differently today than it did then,” he says. “If our first exposure to dance was a Michael Jackson music video, what traces of that still exist in what we are doing? What is exciting about it and continues to inform the work we make? And what is less exciting about it that has maybe been replaced? It’s about what attracted us to dance initially and also reformulating that to where we are now.”

Maia Maiden and Ellena Schoop: *The Foundation, et cetera*

In early 2007, Maia Maiden had her DNA analyzed to better pinpoint her West African roots. Results in hand—she learned of family stemming from Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Guinea Bissau—she set about creating a dance work that would “do some exploring of ideas between what I’m calling the African generation, the civil rights generation, and mine, which is the hip-hop generation. The Civil Rights generation is very aware of its history, but with my generation, lots of people want no connection to history and the people who came before. So we’re trying to show the struggles of the generations through the eyes of both generations.”

Maiden created *The Foundation, et cetera* with fellow choreographer Ellena Schoop, whose experiences in theater and Caribbean and Senegalese dance balance Maiden’s background in hip-hop and step dance. Maiden and Schoop are working with an ensemble of female dancers and several spoken word artists, blending dialogue and theatrical elements with movement.

Maiden grew up in South Minneapolis and cofounded Apple Valley High School’s first hip-hop troupe. “The street was my model,” she says. “It was regular people going to house parties, and you’d battle it out. The technique came from the freestyle, but it came from internal.”

Maiden has danced for Roxanne Wallace and Leah Nelson, among other Twin Cities artists, and has only recently explored her own choreography. Schoop is in her mid-40s, and Maiden says the generational gap strengthens their collaboration.



Maia Maiden and Ellena Schoop, *The Foundation, et cetera*
Photo: Cameron Wittig

"Ellena grew up in the time of the Black Panthers, and her generation acknowledges our ancestors more, but we've both experienced overt racism. It's still happening," she says. "And we all go through pain and love, so we're trying to show the struggles of the generations through the eyes of both generations. You're going to see a show but I also want to leave you with something."

Thursday–Saturday, July 24–26, 8 pm

Eddie Oroyan; Anna Marie Shogren

\$18 (\$14)

Postshow discussion on Friday



Eddie Oroyan, *Brown Rocket*
Photo: Cameron Wittig

Eddie Oroyan: *Brown Rocket*

Among his recent artistic collaborators, Eddie Oroyan can count Craig's List. His relationship with a woman he met through the online classified ads centers the narrative of his new dance work, and he used it to assemble the band providing live music for his Momentum performances. *Brown Rocket*, Oroyan's duet with Minneapolis dance veteran Laura Selle-Virtucio, traces what the choreographer describes as "this crazy, volatile relationship that went up and down all the time."

"There's a loose narrative to it, and if anything there's an emotional narrative. The piece gradually gets more violent, and we start smashing into each other, into the walls," he says. "By the end of the piece, the stage is going to be littered with debris."

Born in Hawaii and raised in Wisconsin, Oroyan is a common presence in Twin Cities dance, performing with the companies of Matthew Jaczewski, Carl Flink, and Shapiro & Smith. He apprenticed with Zenon Dance and cites Bruce Lee, Gene Kelly, and comic book icon the Flash as direct influences.

"I like to have stuff that's pretty intense," he says. "There's just this forward movement, this steamroller aspect, and (Lee, Kelly, and Flash) leave this trail behind them—an image of where you've been but also being present—and that really affects how I approach movement."

Oroyan drew the title *Brown Rocket* from his girlfriend's screen name. The music, a blend of pop and rock, comes from a friend, Joshua Wetjen. "The impetus for this piece was this relationship, but I have a bunch of emails I keep re-reading, and it's transformed into something else," he says. "One metaphor I've been using is that the band is mine—the band is the atmosphere I bring to the piece—but the stage is hers. Think of it as two people listening to The Current while having a fight."

Anna Marie Shogren: *I'm a jerk*

Anna Marie Shogren grew up in Eagan, came to dance through "the typical suburban dance studio," and made it into the University of Minnesota's dance program only after several unsuccessful auditions. Even



Anna Marie Shogren, *I'm a jerk*
Photo: Cameron Wittig

then, she didn't feel connected to a community of dancers until she began working off-campus with Shawn McConeloug, Morgan Thorson, Karen Sherman and Laurie van Wieren, and the improvisational group the BodyCartography Project—all purveyors of more raw, physical movement.

"I've never been a very technical dancer, and (during college) I felt really sheltered in the work I was seeing," she says. "Then I started going to see a lot of things, and I was like 'Why haven't I been going to the Bryant-Lake Bowl every night?' I was so much more interested in and felt very welcomed into that dance community."

Shogren sees "over-the-top, cartoonish death imagery" creeping into her new work, which jumps from detailed, minimal movements to something "much nearer to camp, more jazz, but hopefully not obnoxious," she says. "I tend to thrive in a solo situation, or I separate myself in group situations. I don't know how to play the middle ground, and this piece is a comment on that."

Tickets to Momentum: New Dance Works are available at walkerart.org/tickets, southerntheater.org, or by calling 612.375.7600.

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The Walker Art Center is located at 1750 Hennepin Avenue—where Hennepin meets Lyndale—one block off Highways I-94 and I-394, in Minneapolis.

For public information, call 612.375.7600, or visit walkerart.org.

The Southern Theater is located at 1420 Washington Avenue South in Minneapolis. For information, call 612.340.1725, or visit southerntheater.org.