

THE Arts

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Amid a Sculptural Physicality, a Poet Walks and Talks Onstage

In some ways poetry and dance are natural partners; both create complex and ambiguous meaning through structure, rhythm and sensual logic. Words, like bodies, have a sense and sensibility that creep beyond narrative logic into the realm of experience, whether on the page or in the flesh.

DANCE REVIEW

CLAUDIA LA ROCCO

In theatrical settings, though, the forms can compete, preventing an audience from sinking fully into either. This competition can be used to marvelous effect. It can also frustrate.

Thursday's program at the Skirball Center for the Performing Arts showed the difficulties and pleasures inherent in such multidisciplinary efforts. First came "Stacks," a collaboration among the choreographer Jonah Bokaer, the poet Anne Carson and the sculptor Peter Cole, then "Bracko," a collaboration between Ms. Carson and the choreographer Rashaun Mitchell (a Merce Cunningham dancer, like many of the performers; Mr. Bokaer is a Cunningham alumnus).

Dense, reference-heavy and



ROB BENNETT FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Anne Carson, far right, reads her poetry with the dances "Stacks" and "Bracko" at the Skirball Center.

emotionally fraught, Ms. Carson's often devastating words are not easy stage companions (though William Forsythe, who used one of her stories in his dance-theater work "Kammer/Kammer," showed how spectacularly potent they can be).

In "Stacks" Ms. Carson was lit-

erally in the thick of the action, moving across the stage in increments while reading, as around her Mr. Cole arranged and rearranged precarious towers of cardboard boxes and four dancers executed simple phrases. These were sometimes fluidly beautiful: quick little blooms of movement

that caught at the stacks — of language — Ms. Carson continually built and tore down. An understated solo for Adam Weinert was particularly thoughtful.

Often, though, the movement was dry or abrupt, as when the dancers swiped at boxes, knocking them across the floor and mo-

mentarily, amusingly, obscuring Ms. Carson's words. Her delivery was pointedly dry, minimizing the importance of her more powerful lines and, unfortunately, curdling her wit into something rather more jokey.

Because of their fragmentary nature, her gorgeous translations of Sappho (performed as a text score by Ms. Carson, Robert Currie, Elizabeth Streb and Penelope Thomas) left more room for Mr. Mitchell to maneuver in "Bracko," which he danced with Marcie Munnerlyn.

Sappho's lush, often cruel observations on love were mirrored but not mimed in Mr. Mitchell's choreography, which had the dancers attached at first at the waist by a silver rope. Even when this chain fell, they remained locked in a tumultuous world of grappling embraces, jackhammer leaps and deft little adjustments.

Not all of this movement felt necessary or up to the big challenge of sharing time with Ms. Carson. But it was enough of a taste to make you want more of Mr. Mitchell and more of such complicated marriages of movement and text.