

FEATURE

Dark Impulses, Intimate Settings

Yanira Castro + Company keep NYC theater edgy by performing in your powder room

by Debra Griboff



Heather Olson and Joseph Poulson perform Yanira Castro's *Dark Horse* (photo: Yanira Castro)

There are provocative dance companies. There are funky performance spaces. But for sheer originality, few can rival Yanira Castro + Company. They perform in your *bathroom*. Talk about intimate drama. *Dark Horse/Black Forest*, the company's newest work, is a love story that evolves into a sensual dance. Forget the safety of distance; this is the palpable sensation of art – up-close and personal. Yanira Castro, a Puerto Rican-born choreographer and graduate of Amherst, says *Dark Horse* “evokes fairy tales of the original Brothers Grimm variety, a sense of something that is impenetrable and forbidden, the stuff of sexuality.” Castro explores that fascination with visual and aural installations. Composer Stephan Moore's score, played from a portable cassette recorder, creates a textural environment of arresting sounds.

Though the company's work (*Beacon, Center of Sleep*) has been presented in conventional spaces—Dance Theater Workshop, HERE Arts Center—*Dark's* singularity rests in its bathroom performances. Booked exclusively via P.S. 122, often known for edgy fare, *Dark Horse* is a tactile reminder that art defies expectation. Castro spoke with *Encore* about her craft:

Is there a special inspiration for this piece?

I was in Bellagio, Italy, for a Rockefeller Foundation residency. There were no studios to rehearse in, but I had a large white bathroom the size of a small Manhattan apartment. The whiteness and minimal decor were the perfect frame in

which to view a dance. The intimate nature of the space—almost taboo and certainly a sexual and violent place in our culture (think *Psycho*)—created a tension worth exploring.

How much space do the performers need?

They adapt. We have even performed in a 3 foot x 3 foot powder room. The size and configuration of the bathroom makes each performance unique.

How many guests should be invited?

Dark Horse is perfect for a couple as part of a romantic dinner. A little friction is hot. It also works for a small group of friends who want something to talk about. For brave souls, it's a charged experience for just one.

What's required of the host?

I make a short visit and measure your bathroom, noting any idiosyncrasies, so the piece is adapted to your home. Also, the bathroom must be thoroughly cleaned. A P.S. 122 staffer comes 30 minutes before showtime to ensure the space is ready.

Are there special challenges with a smaller venue?

Size changes the dynamic between the performers, and between the performers and the guests. The smaller it is, the more intense. Another point of interest: tub or shower? I personally love the shower!

A camera will record your event, and a short video montage of your performance will be made available to you and your guests via private login on the event's website. These private performances are being offered for a limited time and reservations can be arranged only through Performance Space 122. E-mail darkhorse@ps122.org.