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.

© 2003–2009 Encore Magazine. All rights reserved.