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Still Breathing

By Kelly Kleiman

Choreographer Sarah Haas curated this hour-long evening, which includes her own work and that of Cutman Dance Crash and Sabrina Cavins. Only Haas's pieces were available for preview, but they alone justify a recommendation. Her Breathing Still, inspired by the Chinese meditative art Falun Dafa (better known as Falun Gong) and done to music that pays homage to Bach, features five dancers whose graceful motions--a combination of balletic movement and yogalike poses--are consistently hobbled or impeded. The more ambitious Haas is, the better: when the group breaks away from bent-legged push-ups in unison, it gives some sense of the power of a movement so threatening to the status quo that it's been banned by the Chinese government. Haas's Wednesday Afternoon Red Line, to Nowhere is a solo to the sound of her own voice, usually mixed to incomprehensibility. This is wise: the text itself isn't very interesting, but the mix provides varied word music for her half-abstract, half-gestural moves. The duet Off Day, a comment on "overworked America," also straddles the abstract and recognizable: there are numerous gestures of exhaustion, and the dancers repeatedly brush their hands across each other's foreheads, evoking sweat of the brow. But for a piece intended to communicate frenetic effort, Off Day has a lot of slow moments. A quicker pace may come from multiple light cues, unseen in preview; at any rate the ensemble shows to better advantage dancing vigorously than pausing portentously. The lifts and holds are spectacular, thanks largely to the one male dancer, Charlie Cutler of Cutman Dance Crash. In fact this pickup company's strong ensemble feel argues for establishing a permanent identity. Link's Hall, 3435 N. Sheffield, 773-281-0824. Through July 19: Friday-Saturday, 8 PM. $10-$12.

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