Dancers in Split Perform for an Audience of One

Emily Wilson on August 31, 2021

When choreographer Charles Slender-White goes to see live performance, he considers what kind of experience is offered, if he’s seen something similar, and if there are ways it could be enhanced. He questions his own work in the same way.

"I ask myself what types of works have I not made or seen, and I continue to ask new questions of myself and my collaborators and to the public," he said. "The intent is to make a new piece of art, not just a riff on the same."

That led Slender-White and his dance company, FACT/SF, to create Split, a series of 300 one-on-one performances starting Sept. 9 at CounterPulse. Each show will last 15 minutes and will be performed by a single dancer for an audience of one.

In 2018, White did a piece, death, where as a part of the show, audience members were led downstairs to three corridors, with a performer in each corridor. The audience member would spend about two minutes in the corridor with a performer. That started him thinking about Split.

"It had so much potential for intimacy. It was almost like a bespoke experience, and there was a lot more juice to be squeezed out of that," Slender-White said about the experience with the one-on-one performances in death.

"Over the past three years, it’s been more and more clear to me the societal interest in connecting in intimate ways. Especially since we’ve been denied proximity for the last..."
In creating Split, White wanted to explore how our identities were formed. He did interviews with people about that as well as taking inspiration from Tony Kushner's *Angels in America* (which premiered in San Francisco, near to Counterpulse's location) and Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* which he sees as about how we form ourselves.

In 2020, Slender-White saw Laurie Anderson's virtual-reality piece *To the Moon* at New York's Public Theater. He and the other audience members were met at the door, taken to an elevator, and ushered to their seats, while being given instructions as to what would happen and what to do along the way. To Slender-White this all felt very considered and made him feel prepared for the experience, and he wants to create a similar kind of mood for Split. Audience members will be led downstairs, offered a beverage, taken to a room with photos of the dancers and community members White interviewed to create this piece, then go to a room with an audiovisual element, and finally be taken to their chairs for a 15-minute performance.

Vaccinations are required, a barrier will be between the performer and the audience member (who will each have an air purifier), and these in the audience will wear masks. Slender-White hopes all this will help ease people's anxiety.

"My hope is that it will be a rich and intimate experience," he said. "I want it to be nonconfrontational intimacy."

Split runs Sept. 9 – Oct. 30 at CounterPulse, 80 Turk Street, San Francisco. Ticket information is available here.

Emily Wilson lives in San Francisco. She writes for radio, print and the web, including Smithsonian.com, Daily Beast, 48 Hills, Hyperallergic, Latino USA, Women's Media Center, California Magazine, and SF Weekly. She also teaches adults getting their high school diplomas at City College of San Francisco.

Did you enjoy the article?

Sign up to our weekly newsletter to receive the latest articles every Tuesday

First Name
Last Name

Email Address
RELATED ARTICLES

A Feature Film Inspired by Boccaccio’s Tales of Love During the Black Death
Jasmine Liu · August 19, 2021
San Francisco’s ODC/Dance premieres Up for Air/Decameron, a project four years in the works.

José Navarrete Mazatl Finds Art in Community
Lou Fancher · June 15, 2021
The Bay Area choreographer, a Guggenheim recipient this year, talks to SFCV about his collaborative, activist work.

Patrick Makuakâne on Balancing Tradition and Innovation
Emily Wilson · May 24, 2021
The Hawaiian choreographer talks about his new recording and finding the boundaries between creation and disruption.

0 Comments San Francisco Classical Voice Disqus' Privacy Policy
Login

Recommend Tweet Share

Start the discussion... OR SIGN UP WITH DISQUS

Name

Be the first to comment.

Subscribe Add Disqus to your site Add Disqus

Do Not Sell My Data

The Virtual Greenroom

Insightful video interviews with great musicians
watch now

Information
About SFCV
Advertise
Contact
 Writers
Donate
Staff
Board
Donate

Search
Events
Previews
Reviews
Features
Artist Spotlights
Music News
Media Reviews
Video

Classifieds
Music Lessons
Music Programs
Auditions
Musicians For Hire
Job Announcements

Learning
Composer Gallery
Glossary

Follow Us

https://www.sfcv.org/articles/preview/dancers-split-perform-audience-one9