



Danceletter 13

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This week in my Dance Criticism class we're reading John McPhee's "[Omission](#)," an essay on writing as a process of "choosing what to leave out." I assign this to open up a discussion about editing with my students, but the message that "writing is selection" is equally helpful for me as a writer.

A few years ago, mostly for my own sanity, I began to look at writing dance reviews as an exercise in letting go. That exercise, for me, usually goes something like this: feeling certain I have nothing to say; starting to say something (anything, as long as I start); realizing I have much more to say than my word count can accommodate; and coming to terms with the fact that I won't be able to say it all (and maybe don't need to). McPhee's essay makes me feel less alone in this now very familiar but no less challenging process of selecting, both consciously and not, what stays and what goes.

Also this week we're reading Claudia La Rocco's dreamy *The Best Most Useless Dress*. If you've never dipped into this collection of criticism / poetry / criticism-poetry, I highly recommend it. Every time I revisit the book, I pick up something new; this time I'm thinking about CLR's powers of selection, especially when it comes to reminding the reader that the critic is a person, too: vulnerable, searching, unsure.

This window into my syllabus (and my writing process) is just about all I've got for you today. Except for a few...

Things to Read/See

Did you hear that Helen Shaw is the new theater critic for *New York* magazine? As Rob Weinert-Kendt writes in [this interview](#), the news is "a welcome blast of hope, not only for criticism and for theatre but for the endangered notion that sometimes the right thing

really does happen to the right person at the right time." Also hopeful: Shaw's observation that her editors "sounded very excited by the idea that dance is a part of theatre, and performance art, and drag. The silos don't need to stay closed."

Over at *Open Space*, I really enjoyed [this essay by Alison D'Amato](#) on the West Coast choreographer Bella Lewitzky and the history-erasing tendency to "situate Los Angeles dance in a perpetual moment of emergence."

Kyle Abraham's A.I.M. is [at the Joyce this week](#) with Trisha Brown's 1976 *Solo Olos*, a new work by company member Keerati Jinakunwiphat, the recent solo *Show Pony* (for alternating dancers Marcella Lewis and Tamisha Guy), and more. I saw the program last night and was glad I did.

Tomorrow (Thursday 10/17) is the latest edition of Dance Holo, a new-ish series in Ridgewood featuring, this time around, Jessie Young, Alexis Zaccarello, and Tatyana Tenenbaum. All the info you need is [on Instagram](#).

This weekend Sundays on Broadway presents [an evening of dance and film](#) by Aileen Passloff, who was one of Yvonne Rainer's early inspirations (YR will be there to talk about that), guest curated by Wendy Perron at Cathy Weis's SoHo loft. A Sundays on Bway tip: Get there early because the doors, in my experience, really do close at 6pm!

My Stuff

I wrote about Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker's *Fase* and *Rosas Danst Rosas*, two of her earliest works (she created both before age 23), and what a new generation of dancers has brought to them. I also spent time in the Bronx and the Lower East Side with *Let 'im Move You*, a decade-in-the-making project by jumatatu m. poe and Jermone Donte Beacham exploring the call-and-response dance form J-Sette. As I mention in my [critic's notebook](#), you can

catch the series for yourself on its 2020 tour, which will stop in Austin, Cincinnati, Chicago, DC, and Portland. In place of the usual "What You're Watching" this time, I'll leave you with what *I'm* watching, and more about this work: