



## Week 3

### Laura Burns rubs whiskey into old and new wounds.

review by Neele Ruckdeschel



“For Helen, Susan B., Sojourner, Julia, Virginia, Lilith. Did I talk about Lilith?”

Laura Burns, a tall woman with black hair and dark eyes, is sitting on the floor in front of her audience. It is the end of her performance in a dance studio at Ponderosa Tanzland. She holds a glass of whiskey. Her bottle wanders from hand to hand, inviting every spectator to drink with her. For the past 15 minutes she has been taking us on a personal, historical and contemporary journey, a journey through an old, diverse landscape of women's stories, connected by a common agony.

Maybe the easiest way to follow Laura's path is from the beginning. She enters the stage, squats, places her hands on her knees and starts to open and close her legs. She asks the audience to open and close their legs. After a few times, she opens her mouth wide while opening her legs, transforming her beautiful face to a grotesque masque.

*continued on page 2*



### If I can't dance it, it's not my revolution-Emma Goldman

Tove Sahlin (Sweden)

Tove Sahlin is a performer, maker and doer and has been coming to Ponderosa since 2005. First as a workshop hopper and later on invited to have a residence and then sharing her practice at porch and teaching workshops.



### the CREAPS



training-play-research, aimed at complicating and opening our concepts of art practice, and at re-imagining our systems of teaching and learning.

Larry Laura Arrington (US), Zinzi Buchanan (UK/BERLIN), Hana Lee Erdman (US/Berlin), Jesse Hewit (US), Sheena McGrandles (Ireland/Berlin), Ayelet Yekutieli (Israel)

**My suffering is the greatest vehicle to understanding my wisdom, gifts and artistic expression.**

**Thank goodness for our bodies with Saliq Savage**

Saliq Savage is a performer, director, Certified Teacher of Body-Mind Centering® and an Infant Developmental Movement Educator

### Far-Out Ladies

The Village Voice, February 13, 1969

Talk about biting off more than you can chew! Last week I saw dances by –let's see-Don Meredith, Monk Hay, Yvonne Hoving, Rainer Tharp, and ... you see what I mean? Groggy. O.K. let's start out with the ladies of the avant-garde and their concerts at the Billy Rose. Twyla Tharp, Meredith Monk, Yvonne Rainer, and Deborah Hay (represented by one piece on Rainer's program) all have considerable intellects – although Monk enjoys letting her id run rampant over hers. They have constructed new and very influential theories about making dances; indeed, I find their works often more exciting as illustrations of theories than for their own sakes. That is, I watch with interest how the thing is done, wonder what materiel will appear next. It's like being a spectator at a pleasant, small, not very competitive game: “How's she going to get out of this one?”

Although the four women work very differently, it might be worth noting the few things that they appear to have in common, and in common with quite a few other contemporary artists. One is a concern with process, with incorporating the creative process into the resultant work. Who said “the subject of art is art”? Thus Tharp's “Excess, Idle, Surplus – a Reconstruction” is performed to tapes of a rehearsal; the dancers count from time to time; Tharp herself claps a beat or occasionally stops and perplexed in the middle of a movement.

### What is your Ninja Name?

Using your First Name



|        |         |         |
|--------|---------|---------|
| A - ka | J - zu  | S - ari |
| B - zu | K - me  | T - chi |
| C - mi | L - ta  | U - do  |
| D - te | M - rin | V - ru  |
| E - ku | N - to  | W - mei |
| F - lu | O - mo  | X - na  |
| G - ji | P - no  | Y - fu  |
| H - ri | Q - ke  | Z - zi  |
| I - ki | R - shi |         |



## Far-Out Ladies,

continued from page 1.

The difficulty of remembering and reconstructing the original dance becomes an integral part of the new version. Monk uses process for her particular brand of irony: at one point in “16 millimeter earrings,” her taped voice describes the movement that she thinks the section calls for (it sounds terrific), but Monk herself is doing some deliberate, heavy stuff – her feet stubbed into fuzzy, encumbering slippers.

They’re concerned with the relation between actual clock time and artistic time, even sometimes to the point of trying to deny the latter. Tharp prints the length of minutes for each dance on the program. Monk tells you that she is going to hold a pose for two minutes and does so. All of them – willing to be thought boring – let a thing go on until it has exhausted most of its possibilities. Images and energies borrowed from sport appear all the time: Rainer’s complicated, but relaxed jogging-rhythm patterns; the way all of them use a plain, easy walk to get from one peak section to another; a lot of “go,” “and,” “one” verbal signals between dancers. Needless to say, in one of these dances does anyone pretend to be someone he is not or act out anything contrary to the flow of the proceedings.

Twyla Tharp has changed a lot since I last saw her work in 1966. She has purged her dances of almost every element but movement. Two out of three at the Billy Rose were performed in almost total silence; I counted only one deliberately illusory use of lighting effects and one prop – a small red chair. Her all-female company is stylishly costumed by Robert Huot – uniform for each dance, varying from dance to dance. Tharp’s mathematical space ratios, the chaste atomism with which she sprinkles her dancers all over the stage, their rarely colliding orbits, the purity of their attention on the movement give her dances an almost Spartan feel – a super-cool college of vestal virgins. And this despite the beauty and richness of her movement. She has been able to do what I thought might be impossible; she has transferred her own incredible style to her company. This style – speaking very superficially – involves acquiring a strong classical technique and then learning to fling it around without ever really losing control. The dancing is difficult, quirky, beautiful, stylish. She varies the amounts of it though. “Disperse,” for example, in two of its sections uses only walks and variations on one turn. The new work “After Suite” has a softer fuller style, half-created I think by the lovely afterflow of sleeves and pantlegs on Huot’s beige jumpsuits.

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continued from page 1.

Again she asks the audience to do the same. The first story Laura tells us is the myth of Sheela na-Gig, a Celtic goddess of fertility and birth, embodied by the figure of a very old woman, sitting on a stone with an exaggerated vulva. Christianization turned Sheela na-Gig into a demon, a warning against female lust and the seductions of the flesh. Her power became a sin. Laura stands up. One of her hands rises up, the other one down, along her body axis. Her upper hand falls onto her head and slides over her face, covering her mouth, nose and eyes, preventing her from speaking.

Her body follows her falling arm and she hits the floor hard. She repeats this sequence over and over again, while talking about indigenous women from the northeast of Canada who are raped and murdered unlamented: women without any rights. Four indigenous women, she tells us, started a protest movement called “Idle No More” that claims from the Canadian government equality for the indigenous community.

She hurts herself, repeatedly falling. She reports about her aching ankles and tries to fall on her other side. She speeds up, swearing and mumbling. At one point she stops and bends her body forward with a curved back. “This is how my grandmother stands, mostly.”

She rolls up a little bit and shifts her shoulders forward. “This is how my mother stands, mostly.”

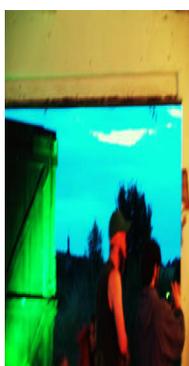
She rolls up completely and lets her head fall back, one hand holding her shoulder. “And this is how I mostly feel.”

Three generations of women. They all look as if they are tired of carrying a weight on their backs.

Laura starts to walk around in circles, saying: “Laura, apologize to the audience for potentially making them uncomfortable. No. Laura, apologize to the audience for potentially being self indulgent. No.”

Then she gets the bottle of whiskey, pours some into a glass and hands the rest of the bottle to the audience. She drinks to these women, to these female figures. I feel a very specific solidarity as our eyes meet and I lift the bottle of whiskey to my mouth. We are drinking to a common knowledge about a collective pain.

Laura takes political, religious and personal stories – stories about women who are oppressed, about the negation of women's natural power and about herself as a woman – and performs them, showing what they provoke in her. She performs her pain and she performs her helplessness, her confusion and her bond with her history and the present moment. Salut!





## Far-Out Ladies,

continued from page 1.

I thought “After ‘Suite’ “ a fine dance; I liked the way brief duets and trios floated back in. Tharp has some marvelous dancers – she’d pretty well have to have. I was especially pleased by Sara Rudner’s pure line; the impudent, almost biting way with which Theresa Dickinson attacks things; little Sheila Raj’s generally winsome style. But this isn’t fair...they were all good.

Meredith Monk isn’t pure or Spartan at all – except perhaps in her carefully limited style of moving. She fills her theatre pieces with objects and sounds and films. Most of these have a super-personal emblematic value. Her stage becomes a kind of macro-microcosm of her own person – small areas within her externalized, blown up, and projected on the stage. She herself moves, speaks, and sings through this private and fantastic playroom. You almost feel that it would collapse if she left the stage. She rarely does, and often when she does Phoebe Neville – identically costumed and billed as a stand in – takes over. Once, a woman walked across the stage, stopped center, said to us, “I’m Meredith’s mother,” and walked away. I like Monk’s humor, her outrageous juxtapositions, her confiding vulnerability. I also admit to being bored, irritated, dismayed some of the time.

“16 millimeter earrings” is a particularly thorough and inventive foray into Monk’s world; it’s the piece in which she puts a paper lantern thing over her head, and a film of her face is projected onto it. “Earrings” also has a great ending. Monk, wearing a ruby-red wig, sits for a moment on a white box with ruby-red streamers blowing up out of it. She then gets in a trunk and closes the lid while a colored film is shown of a doll standing and then toppling over in a burning enclosure. Monk raises the trunk lid and stands dimly naked – silhouetted against the last flames.

Recently Meredith Monk has been experimenting in different kinds of spaces. The Billy Rose didn’t give her much leeway, but she did manage some “lobby exhibits” in the form of people reading by flashlight inside corrugated cardboard “houses.” During each intermission, a few emerged until at the end of the evening they were all out and lying on the debris of their huts.

With Yvonne Rainer, I’ve discovered that once I fit my body rhythms into her easy lope, she makes me feel good. Her dances are big, clever, nicely silly games, and her dancers are adults unselfconsciously at play. Most of Rainer’s pieces are in the form of a string of little sections, each built around a kind of motif. I’m happiest when she keeps the changes coming at a fairly good clip. She called her Billy Rose evening “Rose Fractions.” A few of the things in part one I’d seen before or seen in different form. I love the two trios – one male, one female – who, arms around each others’ waists, perform given movements in a given direction, but in an order they decide on. They back-somersault, run or walk in several different ways, crumple sideways to the floor, crawl over and under each other, and so on. The night I went, the film of Arnold and Paxton playing with the white balloon (already seen on the DTW program at Riverside Church) was shown simultaneously with a pretty ugly sex film shot by a hard-core camera. All of a sudden the two in the original film seemed terribly innocent in their nakedness, and also civilized to the point of being jaded on their chic white couch. I suspect this is another of Rainer’s uses of pornography to clear the decks, or to point up the actual innocence of much that is called dirty. I also thought it wry of her to have Becky Arnold wallow erotically in a pile of unread books or Barbara Lloyd cuddle down on a “horse” that was later used for nice vaults and balances. The patterns Rainer makes with some of their simplest movements are deceptively complex. The evening ended with Trio A from “The Mind is a Muscle” – longest dance phrase in living memory. It was first performed by relative non-dancers in silence, then (pepped up by the Chambers Brothers) by four dancers, then by everyone (still to music), including the unscheduled Valda Setterfield who performed the tour de force of learning it as she went along. It was fascinating and exciting, and I could kick myself for not learning Trio A too.

While I’ve still got breath: Deborah Hay contributed 26 variations of eight activities for 13 people plus beginning and ending. That’s a title as well as a description. The people were 13 attractive young women in street attire. The activities involved walking forward to stage left, running backward to stage right (in various overlapping patterns), walking up three ramps, posing, walking back down, or jumping off. As in all Hay’s pieces that I’ve seen: simplicity, severity, easy-going movement tension, yet subtly drill-like patterns. Interesting that the girls were seen in profile almost throughout the thing – leaving a curious inscrutable impression.

Some people were outraged or bored by the avant-garde performances, which is – I think – as it should be. These dancers are venturing in a new direction; if their work is delightful to a mass audience, then is not defacto avant-garde. It’s the business of the avant-garde to be astringent and uncompromising to keep us from getting too comfortable with the old forms. The rest of us may never reject all our ideas about dance, but we’ll sure as hell re-examine them. We may even follow whole-heartedly in the new direction; then after 10 years or so, the new avant-garde will revolt against us.

# Ponderosa Post

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WEDNESDAY NIGHT ROUGH ADDITION

UPCOMMING:

WEDNESDAY  
NIGHT

CONTACT  
JAM

THURSDAY  
NIGHT

Kathleen,  
Steph, Creeps  
and....

FRIDAY NIGHT  
MARATHON

SATURDAY  
out of rooms by  
10 am.  
:-(

## CLASSIFIEDS?

JUICY TIDBITS?

GOSSIP?

HISTORY TO REPORT?

SUBMIT TO JEN FOR  
TOMORROWS PAPER!

you write it, we'll print it....

