

MELISSA BIRCH



Who Moved My Child (preview)

Written by Melissa Birch

Co-Direction + Sound Design: Sharon Picasso

Choreography: Deborah Jinza Thayer

Performers: Paige Colette, Non Edwards, Taylor Shevey, Missa Kes,
Alys Ayumi Ogura, Laura Levinson + Melissa Birch

Lighting Design: Mike Grogan

NOTE FROM THE CREATOR

Who Moved My Child (preview) formalizes a new direction, since 2007, for chameleon theater-maker Melissa Birch into the bilingual, kinesthetic territory linking ensemble theater and dance.

This multi-sensory theater experience draws on the universal complexities of the parent-child dynamic. By comparing/contrasting elements from Freud's mother archetype—goodness, passion, and darkness—with Birch's personal autobiography, *Who Moved My Child* mines private landscapes of family, heredity, and the personal emancipation that remains possible even as the surrounding world shifts.

I began making performance in Minneapolis over 20 years ago. Still, the same themes revolve. The cast of characters is still real, and fictional. We're still working inside the same idea: time is passing, pass it on. —MB

THANK YOU'S

Enormous Thank You's to The Right Here Showcase, Rosy Simas and Kym Longhi. Sharon Picasso. Dan Nycklemoe and Pablo Jones. Deborah Jinza Thayer. Non Edwards. Anat Shinar. Matt Peiken. My parents. Thank you to the luminous cast, Linda Shapiro and Sarah Salisbury.

**RIGHT
HERE**

showcase

STAGE & ARTS

Ideas in new-dance showcase feel tentative, unfinished

REVIEW: Series that fosters experimentation looks at early photography and female adolescence.

By **CAROLINE PALMER** Special to the Star Tribune | **APRIL 4, 2016** — 5:22AM

The opening weekend of the Right Here Showcase offered more questions than answers. The event, which promotes Minnesota's midcareer performing artists, fosters experimentation. But the works presented by Penelope Freeh and Melissa Birch on Friday night felt unfinished, as if the creators are still deciding which direction to follow.

Both Freeh and Birch took on interesting subject matter. Freeh's "Helioscope," created, directed and choreographed in collaboration with Donna Schoenherr, draws upon the stop-motion images of 19th-century photographer Eadweard Muybridge. The work has a sepia-toned quality to it, as if the scenes were torn from the pages of an old album.

Freeh and Schoenherr summon past longing in their dancing. Their personas are from literary limbo — Freeh darts like a searcher for meaning while Schoenherr sways with a more ghostly, Miss Havisham quality. There is real promise for future development here, but the pacing of the work is too cautious. It seems like there is an attempt to reproduce the stop-motion quality onstage, but the energy ends up constrained. The same holds true when the "cloud corps" dances — the force of their concentration undermines potential for a lighter dreamlike quality.

Birch's "Who Moved My Child" is billed as a preview, which may explain the unfinished quality of the work. The movement theater piece, written by Birch (who also performs in it), has codirection and sound design by Sharon Picasso as well as choreography from Deborah Jinza Thayer.

The subject matter builds on the fever dream that is female adolescence, with all of the potential within for play as well as aggression. Birch, a maternal figure among a cast of six younger women, is a master wordsmith — her clipped words warn us: "I see your chaos and I raise you chaos." Thayer's choreography is built upon pent-up feelings that bounce poignantly between violence and restraint.

The work follows one train of thought and repeats it again at a different speed. The quality of being dropped into the midst of something happening is intriguing — but at the end it feels like the bottom drops out with no resolution. Not that there has to be a pat answer, just something more substantial. Birch has built a sturdy foundation — now to see what comes next.

The Right Here Showcase returns Friday with new works from Megan Mayer and Craig Harris.

Caroline Palmer is a Minneapolis writer.

RIGHT HERE SHOWCASE

Who: Megan Mayer and Craig Harris

When: April 8-10 (times vary)

Where: Illusion Theater, 528 Hennepin Ave., 8th Fl.

Tickets: Suggested donation \$10-\$30, righthereshowcase.weebly.com