



December 13, 2000

Heidi Carlsen: A Gradual Instant

LIVE REVIEW

By Steffen Silvis

Heidi Carlsen's latest work, *A Gradual Instant*, is a piece haunted by a moment in a woman's life. In the face of the present's demands and distractions, the woman slowly travels back into an equally chaotic past to make sense of an instant when she and her sister were swept up into a tragedy – a tragedy that only the woman survived. Written and directed by Carlsen, the piece is a departure for the Portland dancer, as it's as dependent on text as movement. Through the woman's often ironic observations, intermixed with quotations from *Macbeth* and other sources, Carlsen rebuilds her memories, piece by piece, while physically seeking private corners for stillness and reflection. Carlsen is a dynamic performer, perhaps one of the most focused in the city. Each breath and movement is born from conviction and clearly articulated. But one scene between the woman and a train conductor (played by Emily Scherb, who otherwise remains silently on stage throughout) has yet to be fleshed out. In fact, Carlsen is such a strong performer that this sudden interaction seems superfluous. Yet the end of this piece is as powerful as Carlsen, fighting to balance a tray of glasses, reaches back to the instant when the world crashed down around her in a very private *Kristallnacht*.