

The Oregonian

Dance review

Dancer/choreographer Katherine Longstreth well-received in Portland debut at Conduit

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Marty Hughley

The dance studio Conduit was packed Friday night for the Portland debut of Katherine Longstreth. What was surprising about that was the audience included so many children, perhaps a couple dozen. Longstreth's choreography isn't kid stuff, but her children go to an independent elementary school in Tualatin and it was a supportive crowd of classmates, parents and others from that school's community. The short, sweet program of three solos and two duets suggested that dance fans should be just as welcoming.

Longstreth -- who moved last July from New York -- has a recognizable style marked by clarity, musical acumen, gentleness, and now and then a hint of insouciance, as in Nancy Ellis' charming role in "Two for the Show."

Hand gestures and facial expressions are key ingredients, amplifying the emotional exchanges in the duets and the sense of interiority of the solos without making anything too literal. And these works are studded with delightful images: Kelly Bartnik -- in a dark suit, dancing with Longstreth to the sound of Leon Redbone warbling "I hate a man like you" -- mimicking a man's offhandedly cocky primping; Joshua Thrower and Ellis as soldier and sweetheart, rolling about playfully in a wool blanket; the statuesque Longstreth swaying and lifting her floor-length hoop skirt to release clear balloons that flow out like sea foam.

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