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Abstraction, naturalism entwine in 'elements & other works'

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Filled with kaleidoscopic patterns that stream across the stage, Teresa Mathern's latest evening of dances, "elements & other works," is a vibrant, seamlessly woven suite of abstract movement that evokes the geometric patterns of the natural world – spiraling rosette formations, angular branching, the motion of wind and birds – in crisp, spatial choreography and precision technique.

Danced by a uniformly fluid corps –Mathern, Robyn Conroy, Jae Diego, Margretta Hansen, Jim McGinn and Minh Tran – the program's four works are laced with Mathern's signature phrasing and complex shifts of scale and timing. Rapier extensions are set against fleet, arching curves around the body's axis. Angles intersect and refract, setting off a circular momentum that pauses only to recalibrate in the opposite direction.

"Evidence of Division," danced by Mathern and Tran, is an elegant confluence of two agile movers that examines the branching patterns of plant growth, set against large slides of botanical illustrations illuminated on a towering backdrop. On a stage washed in dappled light, the piece begins with the pair in profile, their arms carving slow pendulum arcs to the steady cadence of chimes. From there, the duet develops into swift revolutions that curl into a single line, then launch into sharp, martial-arts strikes of legs and quicksilver spins on the floor.

"Air," the program's sole premiere and first part of a larger work-in-progress, draws on the full company, whose silvered costumes shimmer with every move. From small inscriptions of feet to large, space-eating extensions, the dance reveals Mathern's sophisticated sense of space and architectural composition. Tightly textured diagonal lines crisscross the

stage. Lyrical ellipses orbit at opposing angles and coalesce in a sudden swoop of bodies.

As in Mathern's other works, "air" is built on repetition, the course of motion kept fluent by dancers catching the tail of others' movement and spinning it outward in new groupings. Mathern crystallizes the patterning in a sequence of leaps that bring her angles into sharp relief; Diego's quick launch onto McGinn's shoulder is particularly adept.

In "Versus," soloist Hansen (one of a trio of dancers who will perform the work on successive nights) shares the stage with musicians Leroy Critcher and Joe Janiga on electric guitar and percussion. Their vibrating score builds a tense, nearly mystic aura, ably expressed by Hansen's deep immersion in the movement, which alternates between slow, East Indian-laced hand gestures and wide, reeling spins around the circumference of the stage. Lashing her body in extreme twists to the crash of cymbals or undulating in half-moon arcs on the floor, Hansen is a focused, charismatic mover, evoking the ferocity and trancelike reverie of the score through the sheer force of her body.

Excerpted from the bookends of a longer dance, "night & the golden hour," performed by the company, pulses with athletic trades of lifts and slicing turns on the floor. Six large panels intersect the wings of the stage, where dancers ebb and recede in partial glimpses or join the flux. The effect is not unlike the mesmerizing quality of a tide.

This is a work that rewards at every viewing.