



SIGHTLINES

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Upcoming in April A Tribute to Foster



... Alloy dancers Patti Plascak, Paul Hays and Ginny Adams, seen here with the portrait of Stephen Foster at the Stephen Foster Memorial Museum in Oakland, are getting ready for April's world premiere based on the famous Pittsburgher's life and music. Don't miss this delightful evening of dance as the Dance Alloy moves into spring!



Scott Timm

Upstage Left

OUT OF THE MOUTHS OF BABES

“**M**ommy, I know what that dance was about.” The little five-year-old girl with blonde hair looked up at her mother, “Do you want to know?”

The scene takes place at intermission at one of the Alloy's many performances across Pennsylvania during the month of February. This particular community has seen little dance of any kind, and a contemporary dance company will often raise an eyebrow or two.

The child continued, “The man and the lady were boyfriend and girlfriend, and the other two ladies were friends, too. They didn't look very happy. Then they were all fighting, and everybody was alone at the end.”

She is referring to a performance of Michael Kane's “Coming and Going,” a study of two troubled relationships. Her mother was incredulous. “How could she know that,” she asked, “when she can't read any program notes and has never seen modern dance?”

How indeed? Is this child just a genius? Probably not. In all our travels and work with audiences of all ages, we've found one thing is true; children see an amazing amount. This is especially true of dance.

Children have a wonderful freshness to their approach to the world, and carry with them no pre-conceived notions about what dance should be. They simply experience it as it happens, without worrying of they're getting the “story” or the message.

In the many lecture/demonstrations we do, we often see the children moving their arms with us, usually unconsciously imitating our movements. They respond with their hearts and not their heads.

We, as adults, have the ability to analyze and interpret what we see, giving choreographers lots of fertile ground to explore. However, we gain this rational self by losing a bit of the intuitive, instinctive part of our make-up, and the result is we often cheat ourselves out of **really** seeing a dance. We get so concerned about the message or the intent, we overlook the joy and exhilaration of bodies moving in patterns through a space.

What can we do to regain the child inside us? I'd recommend spending time with the kids themselves. Watch dance together (There's more and more on television today) and get their reactions. See if you can view the piece through their eyes.

You might also try attending a concert and **not** reading the program notes about the work. Don't even look at the title. Enjoy the dance for what it is. Afterwards, look over what the choreographer has given you — both in the dance and in the program — and see what it means to you. Discuss it with others at intermission. And if you're still puzzled, look for that five year old. She'll be glad to help.

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