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**Review - *loveloathing***

## **Dancing to her own tune:**

**Susanna Hood creates sound to match movement Animal imagery central to new dance piece**

**Susan Walker, Toronto Star**

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Susanna Hood's reputation as an artist on the edge was sealed earlier this year when she won the Dora Mavor Moore Award for a dance performance.

In ***she's gone away***, Hood seemed to move not just through several stages of a life, but up and down the evolutionary ladder. She danced, groaned, growled. She was a voyeur, witnessing intimate acts and she indulged in those acts - loudly, on her back, pelvis thrust forward. It was as risky a solo as anyone had seen that season.

Tomorrow night, at Dancemakers Studio, Hood's latest venture into new territory will open, a work set on eight of the company's dancers past and present: ***loveloathing***.

"I seem to have been the kind of person who is always being asked to do something that I don't quite know how to do," says Hood. "Then I learn by being thrust into it."

This time, the interdisciplinary artist is creating a dance on an ensemble for the first time. The process began last year, when she came to Dancemakers for a three-week intensive with Peter Boneham from Ottawa's Groupe Dance Lab. She worked with Susie Burpee, Shannon Cooney, Sebastian Mena, Steeve Paquet, Simi Rowen, Linnea Swan and Danny Wild.

She told costume designer Heather MacCrimmon to come up with something that might suggest "humans gone feral." There is no musical score for *loveloathing*. The sounds are all generated by the dancers. In a rehearsal, they were first heard breathing deeply off stage, their panting rising to a crescendo. The first to be seen is Burpee, wearing a see-through covering, a kind of full-body apron made out of some hairy fabric, over underwear, a signifier of socialization.

She is a horse, trotting around a meadow by herself. Others join her. Anyone who has ever observed horses will know that Hood has paid close attention to their movements.

There are other animals in the piece - at one juncture two dancers go at each other like cocks fighting - but Hood had little time, relatively speaking, to develop the imagery of other creatures she'd been studying.

The gift of Dancemakers, presenters of the show, is the maturity of the artists and their range. From the "rooting spot" of the horse, Hood worked on individual performances, solos, duets and trios, to build a show with a dramatic arc.

The explosive energy of the piece is what makes it recognizably Hood's. A dancer who left home in Ottawa at the age of 15 to train at the Royal Winnipeg Ballet School, Hood later moved to Toronto. From 1991 to 1995, she was a member of Toronto Dance Theatre, when it was still a company branded by the Martha Graham technique practised by its three founders.

She began producing her own shows, such as ***Four ways of approaching a door*** (1997), in which she used her voice and began building what she calls "a language of physical sound."

***She's gone away*** was the third work in a trilogy that began with ***still*** (2000). That piece initiated a working method in which she collaborated with musician Nilan Perera, took coaching from vocalist Katherine Duncanson, employed electronic artist Jim Ruxton and, finally, theatre director Jennifer Tarver in her one-woman shows.

"It's risky," she admits, speaking of the gruelling work involved when you dance and produce sound at the same time. While ***loveloathing*** will be released with this week's performances, she continues to work on another collective project, called ***Somatica***, with some of her usual collaborators and poet Louise Bak.

That one will be finished sometime next year, at which point Hood will no doubt have taken another leap into the unknown.