

Review – Preview of *She's gone away*

Moving through her memories

Paula Citron, The Globe & Mail
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Susanna Hood's choreographic sound and movement signature is at the heart of her latest work, *She's gone away*. The piece completes her critically acclaimed trilogy begun in 2000 with *still*, then *Waking en-dessous* (2004). *She's gone away* is as emotionally charged as her first two dances and begins previews tomorrow at the Theatre Centre.

Hood wears a microphone in her hair, and every word she utters, every breath she takes, every sound that her body makes, is cunningly manipulated using sampling, pitch-shifters, musical processing and feedback by her long-time collaborator, composer/guitarist Nilan Perera. Perera also prerecords a multitude of sound and musical effects to enrich Hood's self-generated soundscore.

Hood, 36, and Perera, 53, met in 1998. "During a rehearsal break I started to improvise to Nilan's guitar playing and we just clicked," explains Hood. "When the show was over, we decided to continue our research into how movement could interpret a musical idea."

Hood and Perera hit upon their unique collaboration by accident. *Dialogues* (1999), a piece built upon their ongoing improvisational experiments, involved Hood's spoken text and singing as well as movement and music. "It was hard to hear Susanna, so we miked her," says Perera. "I was immediately inspired by all the sounds she was generating from her breathing and her body. I told her I heard music in what she was doing. Susanna became the sound score."

There is, however, an amusing problem that this intense collaboration creates during rehearsals. Hood has to remember to turn off her microphone when she goes to the toilet or every embarrassing tinkle is amplified for all to hear.

Hood attended the Royal Winnipeg Ballet School but was more turned on by modern dance than by her classical training. She switched to the School of Toronto Dance Theatre and was a member of the TDT company for four years before becoming an independent dance artist. She is also a singer and actress. "I like fusing sound and text with movement," she says, "because the minute you open your mouth on stage, you are a human being and not an abstract shape."

Perera, a self-taught guitarist, began his career as a graphic artist. His background is both the traditional jazz scene and improvised original music.

For this project, they are joined by a third collaborator, Dora Award-winning director Jennifer Tarver. This is the first time that Hood has used a director but

the piece was developing a confused and overloaded narrative that clearly needed to be shaped and ordered by an experienced outside eye.

Hood's works are very personal. "It's like putting my journal on the stage," she says. It is only with ***She's gone away*** that Hood can clearly see the thread that links the new piece with ***still*** and ***Waking en-dessous***. Collectively, they are the working through of a traumatic childhood incident when she was molested by other children. ***Still*** is what Hood calls the barfing up of the inner turmoil. ***Waking en-dessous*** focuses on emotional distance and denial.

"This piece completes the story and it is a satisfying circle," says Hood. "I believe that if you dig truthfully and honestly into things that are deeply personal, you will end up with things that are archetypal and universal."

She's gone away. Tomorrow (preview), 8 p.m. \$10; Sunday (opening), 7 p.m.; Apr. 25 to 29, 8 p.m., \$15-\$20; Apr. 30, 2:30 p.m., PWYC. The Theatre Centre, 1087 Queen St. W., 416-538-0988.