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## Performing Arts: Dance

### CATERINA RAGO DANCE COMPANY

March 28, 2013

Returning to Manhattan Movement & Arts Center after a 2010 sold-out debut season, Caterina Rago Dance Company presents the evening length New York City premiere of Fall in Autumn. The program's centerfold features only the work's title and two colorful leaves and Artistic Director, Caterina Rago's voice welcomes the audience to "fall in autumn" with her. With only these few details to absorb before the house lights go dim, the audience settles in to let the dance speak for itself.

Rago enters first, a strong performer both physically and in her unrelenting emotional focus. The music of Philip Glass and Zoe Keating (and a live musical appearance by Scott Morehouse) resounds throughout the piece, adding a powerful element to the varied atmospheres created.

Rago's movement evolves right away from picturesque and technical to twitchy and unusual. Her hand waves back and forth at her chest, rising to her mouth as she struggles to keep something in...or perhaps pull something out. Sliding into a split and back up she lunges, her back foot now shaking with a mind of its own.

The only male dancer in the five dancer company, Otis Donovan Herring, runs onstage, to grab Rago at the waist and push her backwards. The two encircle each other aggressively, hands at each other's mouths, sometimes falling to the floor. The mood shifts as the intense duet is replaced by three nymph-like creatures, sweeping the stage (literally) in curving paths with long leafless branches. Dancers Natalia Bizinha, Lindsay Poulis and Marnie Salielli wear smiles, their movement at times classic and elegant and then suddenly comical, miming the operatic notes of the accompanying music.

Rope is hurled out onstage and quickly dragged off before Rago reappears, all eyes on her lengthy, fire-red hair. She becomes a creature, her face only visible when she throws up her head, her hair airborne for a picture perfect, fleeting moment - an enchanting repeated motion in her solo. Rago and Herring each tug on a rope by their mouths with some unknown tug-of-war partner offstage. Their struggle gives way to a dozen guest dancers (from the "60 Dancers Project") entering in black and silver ensembles, and echoing Rago's hair-driven solo. Each reverts to the floor to slowly crawl off backwards as the music calms to sporadic, eerie, whistles.

Of Dora Novak's costumes, the most astounding is Lindsay Poulis' open-backed white gown with a large train. Held on her body by only shoulder straps, it is breathtaking on Poulis as she slowly paces diagonally downstage, to the whistles, holding two large branches to her head as antlers. This otherworldly atmosphere continues as Rago, now topless, twists on the floor in her purple skirt with white powder in her now-tied-back hair, escaping in puffs of mini clouds. The trio reemerges, and with Rago, they finish in a high energy, full-bodied section. It's as if they have all reached some new, better place or state of being after their curious journey and individual and collective metamorphosis.

Originally from San Lucido, Italy, Rago officially founded her company in 2007.

The company's 2013 New York Season was presented at Manhattan Movement  
& Arts Center.  
EYE ON THE ARTS, NY - Jennifer Thompson

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