

Philadanco takes some delightful chances



Philadanco performed at the Kimmel Center. (LOIS GREENFIELD)

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Philadanco came to the Kimmel Center last weekend for its annual holiday treat. This time it presented a suite of dances it called "Dance Is . . . Risky Business," and indeed, Friday night's athletic performance could have knocked preconceived notions out of a skeptical dance newbie with a single jeté.

The company performs Daniel Ezralow's *Pulse*, set to music by David Lang, every few years, and it's fun every time. Where dancers would usually do anything to avoid a skid, here they revel in skidding, wearing special footwear that lets them slide across the stage but still control their movements, stopping for a casual run or a series of impressive turns.

Roy Mercer's *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner*, to a score by Craig Armstrong, Clint Mansell, and Jack Hallam, is another favorite, with the dancers performing on, under, and around a tall table. It's a very gymnastic piece, as they vault onto and leap off the surface, often trusting that an unseen partner will be there to catch them. The table often feels like a wide balance beam, with every pirouette a feat of perfect bravery and symmetry.

Retired Philadanco and Alvin Ailey dancer Deborah Manning St. Charles proved that risk isn't only for the youngest when she performed a pas de deux with a piece of equipment in Talley Beatty's *Ghettoscape With Ladder*, set to Natalie Cole. Manning St. Charles, probably now in her 50s, showed she was still flexible and strong through an adagio series of développés and stretches on ascending rungs, as well as a lift-type balance on the top step.

The evening ended with Christopher L. Huggins' *Latched*, a world premiere for six dancers set to pulsing electronic music by Sohn. It is an athletic piece about connections but could have been a homage to the Olympics. Dancers all in black ran, jumped through hoops made of each other's arms, and cycled with their legs in a fast, fun, nonstop ballet.

This series has ended, but mark your calendar for April, when Philadanco will be back at the Kimmel Center to celebrate its 45th anniversary.

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