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POSTED: SATURDAY, JANUARY 17, 2015, 1:08 AM

The Rosie Herrera Dance Theatre brought some much-needed Miami heat Thursday night to Dance Celebration at the Annenberg Center. The Philadelphia premieres of Herrera's *Dining Alone* and *Various Stages of Drowning: A Cabaret* also provided a few good laughs along with some puzzling and thought-provoking moments.

Both shared oblique historical and political references and autobiographical material. Herrera's father, a Cuban émigré to Miami, had been both a baker and a waiter. She honors him by having (in *Dining*) four of her male dancers wear the various waiter uniforms he wore, and (in *Drowning*) by smashing 10 beautifully decorated cakes.

Three men lift a pink-bouffant-skirted lady and smush her tush into each cake. At first, she enjoys it as the icing squishes through her thighs. But halfway through, she grows uncomfortable and finally begins to cry and resist. But the men won't stop until the last cake is crushed. I took it for a metaphor of consensual sex turned too rough and out of control.

When a hairy guy comes out in a similar dress, we get to make fun of the woman's distress. Oh, am I being too analytical?

Audience members who prefer cheap and easy entertainment may not like to have to think that much (and a few who couldn't left). You could have enjoyed both shows just for their surface gags, their elegant women in Pina Bausch-like gowns and wavy waist-length hair, the excellent onstage pianism of the opening number, *Claire de Lune*, or the beautiful a cappella rendering of a familiar tune. Was it de Falla? Why wasn't the music listed in the program?

Not all the dancers were listed, either. Local dancer Evan Hoffman had worked on the premiere of one of the pieces and was invited to join in here, but had no mention. Nor did Miguel Quinones, longtime star of David Parsons Dance. That's a shame: These two packed power into the slight choreography.

The show ends with a film of a raft floating on the open ocean, filled with assorted characters being dumped into the deep like so much flotsam and jetsam. If you didn't get its implications, maybe you just don't have the head for politics - or the heart for art.

Read more at

http://www.philly.com/philly/entertainment/arts/20150117_Dance_review_Rosie_Herrera_dancers_bring_heat_and_art_to_the_Annenberg_Center.html#PYsCOiGorcVheFDR.99