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Fieldtrips: Live review

Posted in *Unscripted blog* by Zachary Whittenburg on Aug 21, 2010 at 10:34pm

Two dance and two theater shorts seen August 19 at "Fieldtrips"—a regular round-up of artists creating with support and review through [The Field/Chicago](#)—were dioramas of women alone and entering a new awareness. The fifth work, a duet, failed to register.

The theater scenes cut a gash through family relations: In *A Face-lift and a Joke*, **Madeline Heller** plays an inquisitive girl "six and three-quarters years old" and her cynical, cosmetic surgery-happy grandmother at the funeral of the former's mother and latter's daughter. We imagine the shared but missing woman in ever greater, sadder detail as Heller's economical performance jumps back and forth across the generation gap. It's darker than it looks, as are many things to a six and three-quarters year-old.

Tricia Rogers's *Desperately Seeking Maria* is at the opposite end of the spectrum. She begins by playing herself at 8 and her younger sister, Kim, at 7 in 1976, as well as her mother and a Glenview cop, recounting the teenage realization that her mom drove through the front of a local convenience store not on accident, but because she was drunk. It's mostly narrated, which makes it feel more like therapy, but Rogers performs it with a ton of love, her frank, unflattering portrait turning the ovation into a a shocker: Her mother was sitting in the front row, and walked onstage afterward for a hug.

Of the dance work, **Kris Eric Larsen and Leslie Grace Stevenson's** *out from the ties of an Oedipal tangle* is smaller in ambition and execution than [maybe, a funny duet they performed at Fieldtrips](#) in May of 2009. Larsen is a great mover and large man; clarity and heft make a compelling combination. Clichéd text and its nearly-inaudible delivery? Not so much.

The remaining two works, dance solos planned to bookend an intermission but presented back-to-back because of the extreme heat at Hamlin Park Fieldhouse*, are experiences of powerful directness. **Kristina Fluty's** *Lore* comes at the other side of study in Spain with [K.J. Holmes](#) and her appearance in May's *Stamina of Curiosity* with seven-year collaborator [Molly Shanahan](#). In stops and starts, Fluty sings "The Ballad of Julie Anne" in a deep alto while she dances to the far edges of Hamlin's massive-for-indie-dance floor, dropping plumb to the ground—a fresh choice when so much spirals baroquely—and flickering between matching and opposing gestures. Her walks toward us with one palm at hip-height, as if softly on the head of an invisible child, are poems about absence, collated with crossed-leg jumps and a yanked-up right elbow showing her pushed, puppet-like, from within. It's a sad dance, very quiet and final-feeling, but a last pose of firmly fixed recline shoots a note of determination into the space behind the piece.

Carole McCurdy's *Shoot*, on the other hand, is *Butoh*-like dance driven by energy discharged *into* the space, and a score performed live by Rustél Weiss utilizing a thunder sheet, sundry software filters and loop effects, and a sound file he recorded at the business end of a firing range. McCurdy's initial action—a crawl, face-down, across the floor pulled by her wrists fused, torqued, and in some tractor beam like a divining rod—lasts long enough to seem unending before the next chapter is opened which, in the vaguely tropical nightmare of *Shoot*, reveals vines spilling from her mouth, yanked out to release shocked gasps and silent pleas delivered with arresting conviction. McCurdy struggles to stand but topples hard onto her back; our last view of her dreadful trial is a strangely regal sitting up, the crippled attempt of a diseased queen to address her few remaining subjects.

*an occasional issue with summer performances inside a room designed specifically to be an oven

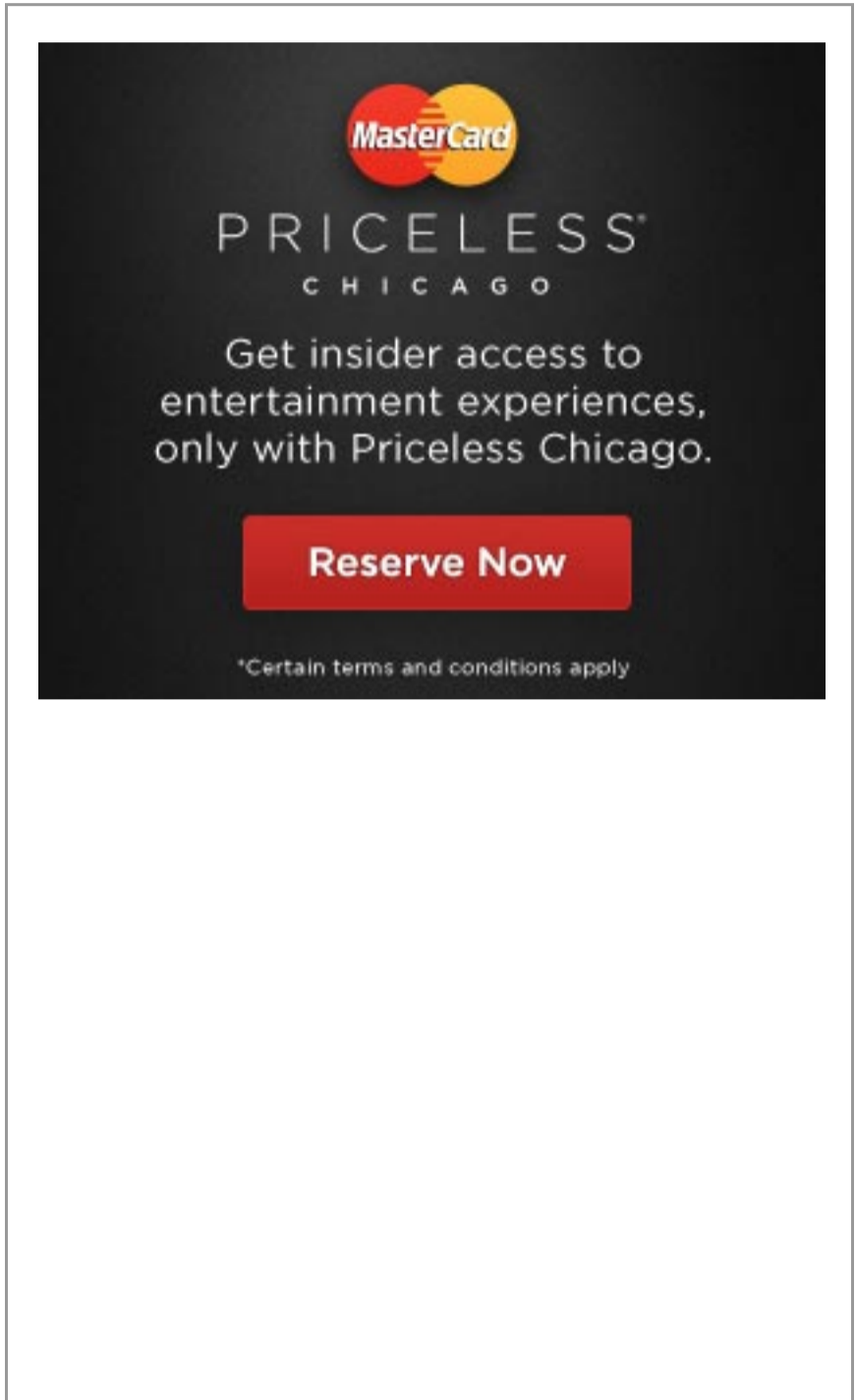
Fieldtrips repeated, with a different lineup, August 20 at Hamlin Park Fieldhouse Theater.

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