

The New York Times

March 8, 2008

DANCE IN REVIEW

LIMERENCE | WEST END THEATER

By Roslyn Sulcas

In Omagbitse Omagbemi's biography in the program of "Limerence," a new work by Keely Garfield, the dancer thanks the choreographer "for this opportunity to play inside the madness." That more or less sums up the feeling of this difficult but powerful piece, presented on Thursday night as part of "Soaking Wet," a choreographic series organized by David Parker and presented at the West End Theater.

"Limerence" is a dense, dark poem of a dance, made up of two successive duets for Ms. Garfield, first with Ms. Omagbemi and then with Brandin Steffensen. It begins to sonorous music that may be Indian (the music credit lists only "Various True Artists"), with Ms. Garfield leaning against the back wall, as if pinioned, and Ms. Omagbemi crouching low. It's an apt image for this work, which takes a hard and unrelenting look at the instincts — power, love and aggression — that lurk within, and suggests that there is no possible escape from the prison of those desires.

Ms. Garfield and Ms. Omagbemi look at each other constantly as they move with indeterminate staggers, bounces and frantically circling arms, or crawl rhythmically across the stage. Ms. Garfield looks slightly distraught, Ms. Omagbemi enigmatically neutral. But with loud rock music, a generic background to the drama of dependence, insecurity and intimacy that they enact, they feel essentially alone.

This drama is marvelously amplified by Jonathan Belcher's lighting: two large mobile units that he and Mr. Steffensen constantly manipulate to cast harsh illumination, flashing brightness or deep shadow on the dancers. Later Mr. Steffensen takes Mr. Omagbemi's place; at the end he cycles frantically on a stationary bicycle, with Ms. Garfield standing on its seat. Nothing, she seems to suggest, ever changes much when it comes to the human heart. ROSLYN SULCAS "Limerence" and "Soaking Wet" showcases will be performed Saturday and Sunday at the West End Theater, 263 West End Avenue, at 86th Street, Manhattan; (212) 337-9565.