

Links Hall series plays true to its fringe approach

By Sid Smith

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You expect the unusual and provocative at Links Hall, a tiny space devoted to innovation, fringe enterprise and intellectual challenges. This month the venue is hosting a series of programs, each one different in personnel and content, inspired by the theme of its umbrella title: "When Does It or You Begin? (Memory as Innovation)."

Judging from Friday's opening (the series plays Fridays through Sundays), memory will be explored subtly, abstractly and elusively—don't expect the obvious. The lineups are multi-disciplinary. Friday's roster included a video by Abigail Child, solo poetry reading by Timothy Yu, an art installation by Jenny Roberts and a group poetic drama from Judith Goldman.

The dance entry came from Nicole LeGette, a Chicago artist who practices Japanese butoh. She is a compelling, hypnotic performer. Butoh is mystifying, enigmatic and challenging, and it's my impression that LeGette clarifies the art for the Westerner.

Friday, she entered the space on a thin black carpet, laid out like a welcoming mat, and performed the entire piece in this very limited physical space. Butoh involves both minimalism and intensity, and LeGette conveyed much by means of slow-motion poetry that gradually erupted into ferocious ecstasy. Clad in gauzelike veils and costuming, at first she evoked an elderly or highly disabled person, her body contorted, her hands gnarled in pain and anguish.

But her piece, "The Sense to Remember," continued as a kind of Several Ages of Woman reverie, or maybe just several moods. She shed much of her attire to wind up in a kind of white, girlish nightgown, while the movement segued from torment to tranquility to a burst of irrepressible joy. Her tiny journey was fascinating, but her real talent lies in the concentration, control and detail she manages in her moves.

The remaining works were interesting, although uneven. Yu read selections from poet Hannah Weiner, performing in tandem with his own prerecorded voice reciting some of the lines. Child deconstructed the Indian movie classic "Aan," partly through kaleidoscopic editing effects, and Goldman's mini-dramas helped illustrate Weiner's use of alternating voices and points of view.

The series plays through Feb. 1 at Links Hall, 3435 N. Sheffield Ave. Call 773-281-0824 or linkshall.org