

# Los Angeles Times

## CALENDAR

Saturday, July 28, 2007

### DANCE REVIEW

## 'My Beowulf' in four leaps

With dancers hanging from the rafters at REDCAT, use of space and artistry take off.

By VICTORIA LOOSELEAF  
*Special to The Times*

He's at it again — Beowulf, that is, the 8th century Anglo-Saxon hero given yet another incarnation in Heidi Duckler and Collage Dance Theatre's ongoing exploration, "My Beowulf." Seen at REDCAT on Thursday as part of its annual three-week multi-disciplinary NOW (New Original Works) Festival, the four sections are intended as part of a full-evening production scheduled for November.

Duckler, queen of site-specific works, made use of REDCAT's rafters, positioning several dancers on and in them to good effect. In the opening segment, "Beowulf on the Couch," Jones Welsh's therapist hung from the bars while Marissa LaBog's patient slid down the venue's railing before the duo came together around the bare frame of a sofa bed — therapy unplugged.

The audience started the evening onstage, treated to an in-your-face experience: the muscular noodlings of the couple, a perfect foil for Merridawn Duckler's amusing voice-over commentary on L.A. life.

Then, back in our seats, we watched George Langworthy's droll film, "Beowulf on Ice," the results of Collage's recent skating show. A goofily noble endeavor, with a break-dancing Kujo as superhero, it primed us for in-the-flesh segments: "Beowulf's Rap" (a poetry-spewing Connor Barrett (a poetry-spewing Connor Barrett) as the conqueror) and "Beowulf and the Dragon," Kujo now the one-arm hand-standing, head-spinning, faithful sidekick Wiglaf.



LAWRENCE K. HO *Los Angeles Times*

**ROPES AND PULLEYS:** Connor Barrett, in white, plays the lead in "My Beowulf," with the Collage Dance Theatre.

Full-blown dance erupted in the last section, with LaBog alternately hawking real estate and writhing, kicking and punching as part of the "dragon" ensemble (Tina Finkelman, Eva Wilder and Carlos Rodriguez, also in faux violence mode). DJ Elsewhere furiously scratched, mashed and mixed on the side of the stage in Duckler's metaphorical take on today's harsh, good-versus-evil world.

The trying "Autopilot," a one-act performance art piece by ensemble Early Morning Opera, opened the evening. Conceived by Lars Jan (who also directed), and Jane Pickett, who wrote the text and provided the 21st century light show, the work featured Jesse Bonnell as a downed bomber pilot stranded in the desert and Sonny Valicenti as the stranger. With Nathan Ruyle's minimalist sound design and Pickett's script including,

among other unsavory notions, eating raw grasshoppers and sand, the most intriguing aspect of "Autopilot" was the visuals. Designed by Bureau V (Peter Zuspan), they were achieved by Pickett sliding a surveillance camera over a plexiglass-topped vitrine, projecting images of such household objects as a family portrait and goldfish bowl.

Where was Beowulf when we needed him?

### 'My Beowulf'

**Where:** REDCAT at Walt Disney Concert Hall, 631 W. 2nd St., L.A.

**When:** This program repeats tonight at 8:30. The NOW (New Original Works) Festival concludes Thursday to Saturday.

**Tickets:** \$14 and \$18. (213) 237-2800.