

DANCE

Weare returns to S.F. with 'Marksman'

Choreographer finds inspiration in tai chi, tango

By Aimée Ts'ao
Correspondent

This weekend you can see one of the most vital dance troupes around — the Kate Weare Company, performing her “Marksman” at San Francisco’s ODC Theater. In a telephone interview with the New York-based artist, I ask her to elucidate her influences and her process as a choreographer — both in general, and in relation to this latest piece.

“I was raised by artists and have always been in the visual art world,” Weare says, “and I’ve always been a carnivorous physical person, meaning I take in, look at, and regard many different physical sources for movement. Not just within dance.”

Weare recently had knee surgery and began studying tai chi to recover strength in her leg. “It’s giving me so much information,” she says. “In tai chi the question is why do we move? Or what do we need from movement?”

This past summer Weare collaborated with Esteban Moreno, artistic director of Union Tanguera of France, on a project bringing together artists from Argentinian tango and contemporary dance in a residency at DANCEworks Santa Barbara. She says, “Tango is something I studied intensely a long time ago for about four years. I never got very good at it — it takes a long time to be good at tango.

“But I was fascinated by the way it made me rethink partnering,” she continues. “There is a shared central axis in tango, while in con-



KIERA HUE-JWYN CHANG

Nicole Diaz, left, Kayla Farrish, Ryan Rouland Smith and Thryn Saxon perform in “Marksman.”



ANDREW WEEKS

Kate Weare is in rehearsal for “Marksman.”

temporary dance, and even ballet, you are tipping your weight toward each other and mediating toward center. Autonomy is the discussion — are you in control of yourself or not? In tango, it’s assumed you are not in con-

trol, you are part of a conversation that requires two people. It’s a very different psychological stance about relationships.”

Weare developed “Marksman” from a trio she made titled “Unstruck” and ex-

panded it into a sextet. She says, “I was grappling with an idea about the forces that act within an individual and from outside the individual. How much control do you really have? And how do you experience control? — holding on tighter or exerting will, or letting go and allowing the forces to actually effect you?”

These questions emerged when Weare gave birth to her daughter, now 5 years old. “Pregnancy and birth threw me sideways,” she says. Philosophically it ripped my head off and made me think differently about the world. As dancer it was the first time I really understood how little I was in control and nature was acting through me. The illusion that I was in control of my body had never been true.”

With “Marksman” Weare tried to step back and think more about form and energy. “In a lot of my work up until then,” she explains, “I had grappled with the individual dancers — who they really are as people, and all the history they bring into the room. Now I looked at them with blurred vision so to not apprehend them quite so sharply by their personalities — more about form and space and time, and less about who was inhabiting the body.

“I also did a lot of reading and analysis about archery and people shooting at targets,” she adds. “One metaphor I used a lot was the nature of taking aim. My tai chi teacher is always reminding me that it’s the spaces in-between the movements where I should really

KATE WEARE COMPANY'S 'MARKSMAN'

West Coast premiere, presented by ODC Theater, choreographed by Weare

When: 8 p.m. today–Saturday

Where: ODC Theater, 3153 17th St., San Francisco

Tickets: \$30; 415-863-9834, www.odc.dance/marksman

focus. It’s in the transitions that interpretation takes place. When you’re not trying, when you’re waiting, that’s when you are really experiencing the movement.”

Weare is no stranger to the Bay Area. She grew up here and, after graduating with a BFA from the California Institute of the Arts in 1994, began her career in San Francisco. She decamped 17 years ago to New York City, where she founded her eponymous company in 2005. Slowly she began making a name for herself, garnering awards, and receiving commissions for her powerful emotionally driven dances.

But she keeps coming back to her old stomping ground. In 2007 she was invited to create a new work, “Foregone,” for Oakland’s AXIS Dance Company. Weare returned again in 2013 to work in collaboration with ODC/Dance artistic directors-choreographers Brenda Way and KT Nelson on “Triangulating Euclid” and was named resident choreographer.

Later that season, her own company appeared in ODC’s Walking Distance Dance Festival with her stellar works, “The Light Has Not the Arms to Carry Us” and “Drop Down.” She choreographed the acclaimed “Giant” for ODC/Dance in 2016. Keep your eyes peeled for her next creation for that company in 2018.