

Public Displays of (self) Affection

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a Lincoln Center commission from Mimi Lien & Itohan Edoloyi

this dance theatre piece aims to celebrate the power & risk in prioritizing queer self-love.

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a crowded plaza – Hearst Plaza at Lincoln Center, to be precise.
a man with a megaphone finds a good place to stand.
he plants his feet firmly.
he calls out,

MAN ON MEGAPHONE

hey
HEY
HELLOOOO
HELLLLLLLOOOOOOOOOOOO
it's me!
it's me!
it's me here, me in love with ME!
sweet beautiful me!

(to pedestrians/passersby)
hi there, hello! hi! hello!

LOOK AT ME!
Let me tell you something:
I LOVE ME!

A DANCER finds a bit of space
on the stairs up to the Grove in Hearst Plaza.
she begins to dance.
a stagehand holds a large sign behind her that reads,
“Smooth, Fine, Sensual and Divine!”

MAN ON MEGAPHONE

this is me!
yes, this is me!
all of me
my pronouns are Me and We!
do you see me?
do you see we?

today we choose me!
standing in the power of me
loving on the power of we

(rallying)
show me what queer confidence looks like
this is what queer confidence looks like

we are allowed to take up space
we are strong
we are courageous
we appreciate everything we have
we are worthy of respect
we don't need someone else to feel happiness
we let go of all that no longer serves me
we look good in leather
we have always looked good in leather
we deserve to imagine a future in which we still look good in leather

the Dance Trio begins to dance in the (near) distance.

we choose me
to love we
me
me
me
love me
some me smothered in me
love love love me some me
today we choose me
you see me
you see we loving me

RANT TRANSITION:

MAN ON MEGAPHONE begins to set his sights on the Dance Trio.

MAN ON MEGAPHONE

(directly to the audience)
you see them
(he points dramatically to the Dance Trio)
we see them
(ad libbing a bit)
hey
hi
heeeeeellooooooooooooo

A DANCER stays behind. she keeps dancing.
as MAN walks toward the Dance Trio,
they interrupt him to shout,

Dance Trio
(sort of in unison, but not really)
hey
HEY
HELLOOOO
HELLLLLLLOOOOOOOOOOOO
look at we!
how much we love we!
we snap for we!
(they snap for themselves excessively, perhaps inviting the audience to join)
it's we here, we in love with WE!
smooth, fine, sensual and divine!
sweet beautiful we!!!

ONE DANCER

here is an affirmation we have spoken to myself!

Dance Trio
(in unison)

October 3rd 2011 - early in the morning, with no plans for the day at all:

Girl, today is going to be a great day.

In fact, it's already lit.
You know who you are.
You are a snack.
You are not concerned with the opinions of others.
You are not addicted to social media. Anymore.
You are wise.
You are loved.
You inner child is free.
You treat each day as a gift.
You find ways to practice mindfulness.
You attract what you are ready for.
You are worth it.
You are ready.
You are not in competition with your neighbor.
You are unlearning negative self-talk.
You are soft.
And you are strong.
Your squats are paying off.
Your booty is strong.
Your booty looks good.

MAN ON MEGAPHONE

we look good at the club
we look good in the board room
we look good in the middle of a long nap
we look good starting families
we look good as we evolve
we look good when we love on each other
we look good at peace
we look good speaking our truth:

one at a time, the Dance Trio speaks their truth for the day.
then,

MAN ON MEGAPHONE
(from behind the crowd somehow)

the truth is ... we look good!

MAN ON MEGAPHONE begins to chant “we look good”,
coaxing the audience to join in.

the Dance Trio continues to dance.

MAN moves away from the Dance Trio, toward the reflective pool.

he invites the audience to follow him.

and then, there is A DANCER, just there in the distance,
dancing on her own at the lip of the pool.

MAN ON MEGAPHONE marches right up to A DANCER.

MAN ON MEGAPHONE

here is an affirmation we have spoken to myself!

June 20th 2023 - midday, headed outside:

Listen fam, can't nobody steal your PRIDE today!

Your queerness is not an accessory!

Your queerness cannot be bought!

or worn!

or emulated!

You are Lesbian!

You are Gay!

You are Bisexual!

You are Trans!

You are Queer!

You are questioning!

You are Intersex!

You are Asexual!

You are Pansexual!

You are plus!

You equals you!

You are smooth!

You are fine!

You are sensual!

You are DIVINE!

You are irreplaceable!

You are unstoppable!

You are timeless!

You have to start wearing sunscreen though - everyday - this sun is no joke out here!

(rallying)

ho ho

hey hey

we need sunscreen everyday

ho ho

hey hey

we need sunscreen everyday

the Dance Trio skips by MAN ON MEGAPHONE and A DANCER.

as they locomote, they say,

ONE DANCER

here is a list of items that we look fantastic wearing:

Dance Trio

(in unison)

tight jeans

all of the glitter in the world

LEATHER

a puffer coat in the middle of summer

ankle boots

drop crotch pants - you're welcome!

a simple v-neck tee

lacey panties

jeggings - which really should make a comeback!

the Dance Trio loops this text as needed

until they arrive at their next location

at the opposite lip of the pool as A DANCER.

once they land, the Dance Trio gyrates muscularly.

then, A DANCER dances through the reflective pool

filled with flamingos.

MAN ON MEGAPHONE
(marching as he speaks)

sometimes being queer can feel like
the world wants us dead
gone!
to have never existed!
when we are Trans
even more so
but we persist
we endure
we survive!
in flesh and in spirit!
and we thrive
on love
we love on love
can't stop our love!
we fight with love
and also with a foot up your a- ha ha HA!!!
oh we have been known to throw a brick!!!
sometimes being queer can feel like
dancing through a reflective pool filled with pink flamingos
sometimes it can feel like
three bodies - three distinct energies - writhing as one
like a Papi Juice party in your mind
either way
in every way
in every gay
on every day
we choose we
we see we
we love we

(rallying through call & response)

we choose we
we see we
we love we

MAN ON MEGAPHONE marches toward
the Dance Trio and A DANCER
at the edge of the reflective pool.
the stagehand is there, too, with that sign. oh yes!
MAN ON MEGAPHONE is still chanting.
the company joins in.
as they chant, the wee protest family marches away.

END.