



BONE PORTRAITS

Stillpoint Productions at Walkerspace

Did you know that hand X-ray portraits were once a craze sweeping the nation? Neither did I, and this fact is one of the joys of the creative theatre piece *Bone Portraits*. Stillpoint Productions' mission is to create "multidisciplinary performances fueled by the collision of historical fact and contemporary imagination," and *Bone Portraits* mixes vaudeville, film, and inventive ensemble work to tell its story of the attractions of science and the dangers of progress.

Written by Deborah Stein, directed by Lear deBessonnet, and credited as being "conceived and co-created with the ensemble," the show includes newspaper headlines physically embodied and courtships conducted as vaudeville routines. The Inventor, master of ceremonies Thomas Edison (Gian-Murray Gianino), popularizes not just electricity but also the X-ray invention of Wilhelm Roentgen (Michael Crane). Edison's assistant and a true believer in his work, Clarence Dally (Adam Green), threatens to ruin his marriage to Josephine (Jessica Wortham) with his obsession. Journalist Edward Giddings (Crane) and seamstress Myrna Otis (Miriam Silverman) struggle to keep their equilibrium against the vertigo of progress. The show also touches on Marie Curie and Dr. Duncan MacDougall's weighing of the human soul.

This turn-of-the-century period lends itself very well to pastiche (think of *Ragtime*), but the characters in *Bone Portraits* don't have enough pathos to sharpen our focus. In addition, though the characters don't know that radiation is dangerous, the audience does, making the show feel overlong, even at 90 minutes.

Nevertheless, this production is a theatrical delight. Stein's script is fun as well as fascinating, and deBessonnet uses the space with ingenuity. Justin Townsend's scenic and lighting design are tops, as are Kirche Leigh Zeile's costumes, Gregory King's video and film design, and Mark "Muttt" Huang's sound. The ensemble work is first-rate. Stillpoint is a company to catch.

*Presented by Stillpoint Productions
at Walkerspace, 46 Walker St., NYC.
May 5–20. Wed.–Sun., 8 p.m.; Sat., 3 p.m.
(212) 352-3101 or www.theatermania.com.*

Reviewed by Gwen Orel

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