

The BROOKLYN RAIL

RoseAnne Spradlin at The Kitchen (excerpt)

by Vanessa Manko

January 2004



RoseAnne Spradlin's under/world. Photo by Roger Gaess.

Water also makes an appearance in RoseAnne Spradlin's *Rearrangement (or a Spell for Mortals)* which had its premiere at The Kitchen in November. Glass boxes filled with water line the perimeter of the stage. Two dancers (Walter Dundervill and Athena Malloy) begin a duet of intricate patterns meant to resemble DNA sequencing. How exactly does this translate into movement? While one dancer begins a phrase, the other is a moment behind and they circle round each other in one continuous coil. Dundervill and Malloy seem set on the same path, reaching the end via different means. They sometimes shake and spasm or lift a leg to the side or release into a controlled plié. At other moments intricate footwork requires each to stamp out a rhythm; one finishing a hair's breath behind the other. While *Rearrangement* is rather heady in its attempt to bridge dance and science, the fact that there is a man and woman dancing on stage infuses the piece with human emotion. In some ways, Dundervill and

Malloy seem like a quarreling couple who, though speaking the same language, cannot understand each other. There is a groping sense to the movement quality as the two rehash and retrace their steps, and this creates a disquieting yet powerful effect.

Spradlin's 2002 *under/world*, which won a Bessie earlier this year, was also on the program. Divided into two parts— "Gravity Ball" and "Night Sweating"— *under/world* offers a glimpse into the world of private sexual obsession and delves into fetishism through dance. And what better way to do this than through the body, exploring dance's seamier side. In this trio, Dundervill, Malloy, and Tasha Taylor continually walk up and down a runway that divides the stage and spills over into the audience. As the dancers enter, they launch into "performance," modeling particular fetishes. *under/world* has a rawness to it, and this is not because of the visible amount of flesh to be seen (dancers are nearly nude throughout). Rather, Spradlin's dancers have a desperation to their movements, as if constantly struggling through life and so there is also an unpolished freshness to the dancing— its unfettered and Dundervill, Malloy and Taylor move with wild abandonment, like furies whirling and twirling through the underworld. Spradlin is not afraid to explore a darker side of sexuality and in so doing distills a surprising beauty.