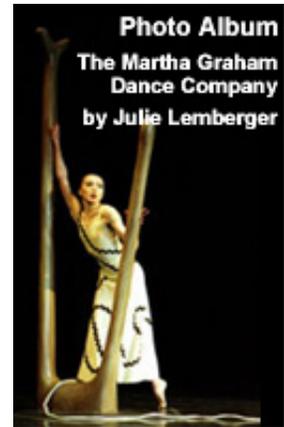


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Flash Review, 4-25: The Big Blink
Jewett probes the pupil

By [Christine Chen](#)

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NEW YORK -- In Lostwax Productions' "Blinking," seen Friday at the Merce Cunningham Studio, collaborators Jamie Jewett and R. Luke DuBois explore what happens, physically and psychologically, when we blink. Through a series of powerful images, created with six dancers and an impressive composition of media projections, "Blinking" is a meditation on the dark moments that splinter our vision, the connections and perceptions we unconsciously piece together from disjointed images, and the flashes that appear behind our eyes when we take the long blink of sleep.

Citing Malcolm Gladwell's book "Blink" in the program notes as the philosophical inspiration for the performance, Jewett, a former colleague of mine at Ohio State University, and DuBois attempt to uncover how we are able to construct scenarios and judgments, given only slices of a full picture. Each of "Blinking's" five sections breaks apart a different series of impressions contained and perceived in one woman's blink of an eye.

Entering the studio, the audience is immersed immediately into an altered environment. A projection of a woman (Crystal Gandrud), standing on a pier, fills the sizable back wall of the Cunningham space. The spectacle proper begins with a new scene. Gandrud stands in a lobby, speaking, watching, and blinking. Each blink is amplified and emphasized with sound. Two young boys (Benjamin Jewett and George Vavrik) play in the scene on the screen behind her. Their entirely unselfconscious movements are repeated and spliced, then mined for material by the live dancers, whose movement interplay is directly sourced from the kicks, lunges and falls created spontaneously by the boys. DuBois creates additional

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abstract projection effects by capturing the live action with a camcorder, then manipulating and projecting it to the back wall and floor in real time. These projections capture, enhance and comment on the live action.

Jewett's choreography is at its most powerful and effective in the next section, which features five dancers. In the background projection, Gandrud peers into the rearview mirror of a car. What happens on stage then postulates what might be happening behind her eye and in her mind as she sits in the car, taking in the visual stimuli around her. The dancers' movements are alternately simple and rhythmic, then athletic and acrobatic. They walk through the room, revealing patterns in space, nearly missing one another, both aware and unaware of each other. They unfold and refold into unison, bounce to a driving rhythm, then collide and connect. With all the kinetic output, however, Jewett is patiently intentional in the way he weaves his tapestry. In doing so, he allows the audience to slowly piece together patterns and understanding. Dancers Amanda DelPrete, Kim Johnson, Elise Nuding, Michelle Struckholz and Meg Weeks flawlessly execute his precise and full-bodied movement.

Jewett and DuBois create another lasting image when they probe the idea of sleep as one prolonged blink. On the back wall projection, Gandrud sleeps. Shura Baryshnikov is wheeled out onto the stage on a tall scaffold, which simultaneously suggests an image of both a pier and a bed. She appears to be sleeping, while Kim Johnson performs a tour de force duet with a cluster of lights that follows and reacts to her movements. Johnson ventures away from her animated R.E.M.-inspired movement sequence to wake Baryshnikov, who then enters a surreal world where she dresses and moves between a waking and a sleep state.

"Blinking" is an ambitious work, and represents a strong leap forward for Jewett's Lostwax Productions, whose previous multi-media projects ("Seven Veils," "After the Fall") I have seen. Jewett has found a potent collaborator in DuBois, who has helped the choreographer integrate the effects of digital culture with the drama of live performance.

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