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## Jamie Jewett's "Blinking" at FirstWorks



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Monday, October 11, 2010

ARTS by Tracey Minkin, GoLocalProv Features Editor

FirstWorks takes advantage of great choreographic, not to mention multimedia, artistry in its own backyard this week. Providence resident Jamie Jewett unleashes [Blinking](#), the newest work for LOST WAX, his multimedia dance company, at the Pell Chafee Performing Arts Center on Thursday-Saturday. He took a moment out of tech rehearsal this weekend to talk about the work.

**Summarize the inspiration for the work we'll see presented at FirstWorks, from you.**

Blinking explores just that, the moments lost when our eyes our closed. On average, we blink 10 times a minute – what didn't we see? It is as if we were exploring that moment when you see someone's shoulder in the supermarket and instantly recognize who it is. How does insight or knowledge come to us in a flash? There are lots of people who have talked about this knowing, Allen Ginsburg, David Parsons, Malcolm Gladwell and so on. We are interested in how we can be moved by the momentary and the fleeting, by a moving still.

There are five sections in the work and each is inspired by the act and rhythm of a different thing blinking – eyes, turn signals, fireflies, and sleep - which we consider a long blink.



**How does this work fit with the opus of work you've created thus far? Continuation? Enhancement? Departure?**

I create multimedia dance. So to that end this piece is a continuation of that exploration. At the same time there are some significant differences. One interesting thing to do as an artist is to create rules for a given piece. These rules act as a structure that inspires creative solutions and new ways to think about what you do. In Blinking there is a very intense and rigid rhythmic structure that all of us are responding to – choreographically, but also the music composition,

projection, and lighting design.

This provoked really different kinds of thinking about choreography for me. I rarely count (rhythm) at all in my choreography and in the first half of Blinking we are exact about what is happening at every beat. For example, turn signals on different cars blink in different rhythms – in that section each dancer is working with a completely different rhythmic structure. This was so complicated that I ended up using an Excel spreadsheet just to keep track of what



was going on and who was on which beat.

**The classical dance community in RI gets the lion's share of the press coverage. As a dancer working in the non-classical form, do you agree? And how would you characterize the non-classical dance community here?**

Historically classical dance gets more press coverage and even more significantly, funding. If you look at the 1.7 million dollar budget of Festival Ballet and compare it to Island Moving Company, Everett Dance Theater, Fusionworks, and Lostwax together we are not even a tenth of their budget - nor of their press coverage. Frankly the funding is more of an issue than the press.

That said, I think that much of the work Festival is doing is excellent. I just wonder that we as a society value classical dance so much more than contemporary works. I think that non-classical dance in RI is barely surviving – most of us are essentially doing it for free or at a loss. Given that, what IS happening is great. We are particularly grateful to FirstWorks and RISCA for their support of more experimental work. I think the primary issue is that there is not a proscenium stage, studio theater, or blackbox big enough for most dance that we can afford to access.

**Why'd you move here?**

I moved here because my wife is a professor at Brown and because I liked the scale of the city. Once here, I did a second Masters and a PhD at Brown. Now I am focusing on trying to make things work as a professor and professional dance artist.

*Blinking at the Pell-Chafee Performance Center, 87 Empire St, Providence. Showtimes Thurs Oct 14 7pm, Fri Oct 15 7:30 & 9:30pm, Sat Oct 16 7:30pm, tickets \$16-\$22. Get more information and purchase tickets at via GoLocalProv's ArtTix, here.*

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