

## **Keigwin + Company, Joyce Theater, New York**

By Apollinaire Scherr

Choreographers often send dancers streaming across the stage, from wing to wing. Traffic on the royal road – the diagonals – is also heavy. But forward and back – dancers rushing towards us like oncoming traffic, then doing an about-face – is rare because it shrinks the stage to the size of a shoebox. It is precisely for this reason that the all-purpose choreographer Larry Keigwin chooses it.

In the absorbing *Exit* (at the Joyce until Sunday), the seven committed dancers regularly surge towards us, then turn around to slam into the back wall. As they retreat, they do a little stutter step, like a leaf suspended in a gale. This peculiar dynamic – movement swung out to an extreme only to jerk back and, sometimes, stop dead – runs through *Exit* and gives it its kick.

The dance is Keigwin's ballad of sexual dependency. It is studded with coupling and uncoupling, and recoupling with someone new. A man slips out of the cage of another man's arms only to approach a woman. She swings her arms at him. He flings them aside like a samurai knocking swords out of his opponent's hands. But he misses one and she plants a palm on his chest like she were stabbing him.

Together with the deep shadows, Christopher Lancaster and Jerome Begin's compelling, layered score conjures a dance club. With bondage restraints wending up their arms or strapping their buttocks, the partiers signal that they're game for S&M. But the interactions could take place anywhere, with anyone. Veering from tenderness to contempt, each duet is so specific that you lean in to catch the details and forget the club trappings. *Exit* feels urgent, as if it were discovering moment by moment what bodily pleasure had to do with the impulse to hurt. And who wouldn't want to know that?

The escape that *Exit* offers from the trap of domination and submission is solitude. At hour's end, when the lighting suggests a window is somewhere near, the dancers converge at centre stage, but each remains in their own world. Now the dancing floats more than it flings: on your own the skein of pleasure doesn't dissolve in pain.