

## NEW PRODUCTION

60 dances in 60 minutes,  
and no watches allowed

SUSAN WALKER

SPECIAL TO THE STAR

Hold on a minute.

What's this new dance from Michael Trent? Seems he was thinking about time when his Dancemakers dramaturge Jacob Zimmer gave him a writing exercise.

"You had to write a dance that lasts a minute," Trent recalls. "You had to think it out and write it long-hand in under 15 minutes." The task gave Trent the kernel for *It's About Time: 60 Dances in 60 Minutes*, which opened last night at the Enwave Theatre.

It's not as simple as it sounds. The piece starts with an exercise for dancers Robert Abubo, Kate Hilliard, Benjamin Kamino, Steeve Paquet and Kate Holden. They close their eyes and imagine the passage of 60 seconds. Each of them raises a hand when it seems a minute is up.

Try it in a group: no two people will put their hands up at the same moment.

Trent calls this part a "sensitization." Then there's a 10-minute segment, a period of time divided four ways with 15 actions repeated in each section — hence the 60 dances. Then the 10-minute segment is expanded to 30 minutes and similarly divided. At the end, the audience gets to join in the one-minute sensitization.

In rehearsal, the piece proved far less pointy-headed than it sounds. Rather playful, in fact. It's intriguing how the characters — the dancers, shorn of their stage personae — go about their routines in a choreographed fashion, sometimes giving counts while doing quirky things. Paquet gives a hilarious demonstration of how to spin your body while balancing a Frisbee on your head. "Put it right on top of your crown chakra," he instructs.

Timing, repetition and counting beats are essential elements of all choreography, but Trent is not just deconstructing dance. The minute,

he says, "seems like a way that we deal with life: 'take a minute,' 'just a minute,' 'hold on a minute.'"

Curiously, he found, there is no consensus on how the minute came to be. Precise timing came in with the Industrial Revolution and the need to make trains run on time without running into each other.

Trent saw a larger issue embedded in our obsession with time: "the difference between absolute truths and perceptions and the way that we're supposed to be with people in the world."

That is why there are so many quotidian actions in *It's About Time*. "It is about sharing the space with these five people. I think the body is a great place for us to understand time," Trent says.

All the dancers are interacting throughout the piece, constantly redefining the space. Some of the choreographed bits are endurance tests, such as a tickling vignette, in which the ticklee has to put up with three minutes of intense stimulation from another dancer or two.

Composer Joshua Thorpe took Trent's idea of imagining a minute and handed out audio recorders to 60 people. Every one of them was asked to imagine a minute and capture the sound that occurred in that time. Where the recorded "minutes" were less than 60 seconds, Thorpe left dead air; where the recordings are longer than 60 seconds, they overlap each other.

No need for head-scratching this time. This Dancemakers occasion is about delight and joining in the fun. Just remember: no watches allowed.

## Just the facts

**WHAT:** *It's About Time: 60 Dances in 60 Minutes*

**WHERE:** Enwave Theatre, 231 Queens Quay W.

**WHEN:** Through Saturday

**TICKETS:** \$20-\$38 at 416-973-4000