

seeking meanings in the dust

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Bill Young/Colleen Thomas & Dancers

NYU, Tisch School of the Arts

Fifth Floor Theater

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The performers in Bill Young and Colleen Thomas's enthralling new *Dust* live in a world of entrances and exits. The stage—bleakly, sometimes drastically lit by Tim Cryan—could be a deserted train station, a wasteland campsite, a spiritual limbo. Always we're aware of people waiting, surveying the scene. Furious motion erupts from immobility.

The atmosphere is darker than in previous works by Young. The random overcoats on hangers—part of Joanna Seitz's set, occasionally worn—emit dust when whipped around. In the beginning, when Mio Morales's music is still only a gentle jangling, Young and Pedro Osorio sit on a rectangular box, staring wearily around. The lights go out and come back on with a burst of smoke, and—*shazam!*—a man (Darrin Wright) hurtles recklessly across the stage and disappears. Joseph Poulson, Abby Crain, and Thomas make singular forays into and through the space—Poulson's so violent that you wince.

Now for the shocker: entering and exiting redefined. Young and Osorio split their box into two cubes, revealing a pair of pathetically limp little legs poking out of one. It's

hard to take your eyes off those legs to watch Wright, Crain, and Thomas dancing in rich, flung-out unison. As the boxes are repositioned, we glimpse the old magic trick: a woman sawed in half, waving legs (Jennifer Felton) protruding from one box, a head (Tamara Riewe) from the other. (I don't even want to think about rehearsing this.) No wonder Riewe is crazed when she finally pries herself out of the box. No wonder Young is standing at the back shaking.

In their repeated flying forays, the dancers often seem to be making assertions against gale-force winds. Young, having given away a coat, thrashes in place, as loose as a coat himself. Whatever these people are enduring, they're enduring it together, although tenderness is more implied than stressed. When Thomas lies briefly on top of Osorio, she might just as well be another coat. Those lifted by the group in a wrangle of soft limbs look as if they've been pushed upward mainly by the pressure of other bodies.

By the end, Riewe and Felton are pleating themselves back into their boxes. Thomas crosses the stage sifting flour. While everyone else freezes, Young crawls along, gathering the flour into little mounds. Dust unto dust?