

DANCE REVIEW

A Troupe Is an Extension of an Artist's Lively Brain

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It's perhaps not quite accurate to say that [Yvonne Rainer](#) has an official company. What she has are the Raindears, a troupe consisting of dance artists with their own distinct careers.

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Richard Termine for The New York Times
"Assisted Living: Good Sports 2," by Yvonne Rainer, is at the Baryshnikov Arts Center.

Pat Catterson, Emily Coates, Patricia Hoffbauer and Sally Silvers form the core of this charmingly nicknamed group. Since Ms. Rainer returned to dance in 2000, I can't recall seeing her work without these women, and by now they seem like a marvelously unruly extension of her choreographic brain. There they were again Wednesday night (joined by more recent members Emmanuelle Phuon and Keith Sabado), for the American premiere of "Assisted Living: Good Sports 2." That was one of two Rainer works that the arts organization [Performa](#) presented for a packed, art world-heavy crowd at the [Baryshnikov Arts Center](#).

"Spiraling Down" (2008) and "Assisted Living" (2011) could be companion pieces in their mix of raucous and somber energies, text and movement collages and sampling of past works. Both thrum with the sense of distinct, mature intellects. The choreography doesn't credit the dancers as collaborators (though Ms. Catterson is listed as Ms. Rainer's assistant), but these dances seem to serve as containers in which disparate personalities can play and jostle.

Sometimes it feels as if a (good-natured) fight might break out between the performers, who often not-so-gently shove each other, or jockey for position as they run and scuffle. But no, this is the fight, this serious romp of

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minds and bodies.

There is, occasionally, an overarchness or cuteness to this romp, especially in "Assisted Living," which includes rough-and-tumble physicality, campy excerpts from songs and pointed ruminations on history and government. Here, the ingredients are too obviously juxtaposed. But there are many more irreducible moments of beauty and strangeness, as when Ms. Rainer, clad in black among her sporty, brightly costumed dancers, slowly turns in the center of the stage, seeming lost and sad in the midst of her creation.

Ms. Rainer, who does much of the speaking, mostly sticks to the perimeter, where she and two others (the lighting designer Les Dickert and the set designer Joel Reynolds), identified in the program as Movers, methodically reposition a collection of objects along the stage's margins. Two metal folding chairs, a dingy twin-size mattress, a wooden barrel, lights and thick cables: these things become, along with the people moving them, a traveling sculpture, quietly offsetting the jogging, tumbling bodies they frame.

Ms. Rainer is only heard in "Spiraling Down," her warm, wry voice largely forming the soundtrack as the four core Raindears play with sporting and dance motifs, as well as ideas about how women can and should behave (and how they actually do). Here, and in "Assisted Living," it's as if Ms. Rainer is looking back, pulling strands from her past adventures and using them to make sense of the current one. It's a fine mess she's gotten herself into. Again.

Yvonne Rainer and her Raindears perform through Saturday at the Baryshnikov Arts Center, 450 West 37th Street, Manhattan; (212) 366-5700, [performa-arts.org](#)

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