

## Brighten the Corners

*August 13, 2012*



Heather Woodbury Photo: Steven Gunther/REDCAT 2012

The final week of [REDCAT's New Original Works Festival](#) was perhaps the strongest evening of this year's shows, all of which featured the newest and most adventurous work from L.A.'s own. It was a particularly good year for the festival overall, especially on the theatrical side of things, and the final night was no exception. The night started off with an hour long snippet from theater iconoclast Heather Woodbury. Woodbury, of course, is known for her expansive multi-character pieces that aim to capture a world or moment in time more than a single dramatic arc. Her latest, *As the Globe Warms*, is another massive work that will take place over a projected six evenings condensed from 33 half-hour web series installments that were used in the work's development process. Woodbury plays all the characters in this contemporary American landscape where the reality of ecological decline meets the world of American religious fanaticism and right wing politics. The short selection Woodbury delivered at REDCAT was a work out focusing on a Christian teen convention where one of the show's protagonists, a teenage girl who gives spiritual voice to the natural world, has come to meet the followers of her online ministry. Woodbury delivers a wild array of young characters in the performance, flipping between the sounds and physicality of these young adults with ease. It was a work out of a turn, but one that was ultimately funny and completely enthralling in both its strangeness and simultaneous familiarity.

The evening's center was filled with a new dance work, *La Tribu* from Melanie Ríos-Glaser. The title implies a sort of communal living arrangement and the four dancers, all women, were clothed in identical monotone jumpsuits emphasizing a sort of genderless neutral grouping of dancers. The performance was largely contained within something akin to a square rustic-appearing U-shaped corral complete with electric fans in the walls. The mismatched wood of the corral walls and some of the audio accompaniment implied something vaguely Latin American about the piece, but the almost gymnastic and utilitarian quality of the movement seemed to stray in quite of different direction. It was pleasant enough, but the references were a bit too oblique to follow in the larger sense.



The cast from Emily Mast's *B!RDBRA!N* Photo: Steven Gunther/REDCAT 2012

As for the concluding piece, Emily Mast's *B!RDBRA!N*, it was in some ways the most sweeping and challenging work throughout the whole festival, serving as neither a dance work nor an explicit theater piece. The seven-member cast included a large elderly man and a young child as well as a man dressed as a parrot. They would come and go within a circumscribed performance where set pieces of brightly colored geometric objects would be placed and later removed. All of this referred obliquely to the work of French artist Guy de Cointet who worked in L.A. throughout the 1970s, as well as a true story of a 30-year avian language experiment. There were no outright narrative elements to the performance, but often the cast engaged in word games with each other, suggesting some of the oddities in which our brains process language. There was something playful and irreverent in the work that reminded me in a way of Jacques Tati, and the bright visual elements were equally as entertaining as the sometimes pointless stage action that concluded with an auction for a painting of nothing. The sheer warm spirit of the work and its bubbly clever cast made it a joy to experience, and it felt sophisticated and ground breaking at the same time. And in the end that is what the NOW Festival is really all about. This year especially, the works on offer often felt like they were in fact going somewhere, looking ahead to something larger and more adventurous in scope.

Labels: [REDCAT 11/12](#)

[\[Permalink\]](#) Posted by Brian I 8/13/2012 11:30:00 PM

## Comments:

[<< Home](#)

