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## **Fade Away and Radiate**

**Richard Move**

**"The Show (Achilles Heels)"**

**The Kitchen**

**New York, NY**

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**by Lisa Rinehart**

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"The Show (Achilles Heels)" is Richard Move's latest stylish step to legitimacy beyond the exclusive world of gender bending club acts. (In the interests of full disclosure, I should note that Baryshnikov Productions, an organization with which this writer is indirectly connected, is a co-producer of the work. Originally commissioned for the White Oak Dance Project in 2002, the piece on view at the Kitchen is the present incarnation of

Move's earlier work. Needless to say, this review, as with all my reviews, reflects my opinions as an individual.)

That said — back to the show. By steeping an ancient Greek love story in the glam of 1980's New York night life, Move has created a tone poem of sorts based on the classic human dilemmas of love and death. The story of Achilles and Patroclus\* is set to an original score by Arto Lindsay and Blondie with Deborah Harry in fine form as an eighties Athena decked out in the decade's most egregious fashions. The mood is dark, the lighting is dim and the show throbs with the thudding bass of an era that is no more. Never thought I'd be nostalgic about the excesses of the 80's, but Move's gentle treatment of two dear friends clinging to one another in dire times dredges up mournful memories of when the AIDS virus first barreled through gay New York. Move's show isn't about AIDS, but it is about facing loss and grief and survivor guilt before one has even considered the notion of one's own mortality. Like so many exuberant and feckless New Yorkers of that time, Achilles, the body beautiful, the invincible warrior, is made vulnerable by love and pays with his life.

If this sounds terribly dry and academic, in Move's hands it most certainly is not. Move is not a choreographer per se, but a collector of choreographic styles with a penchant for the flamboyant. He relies heavily on his dancers to translate his ideas into movement and is adept at knitting this collection of threads into something coherent. There are moments verging on camp such as dancers lip synching with hysterical accuracy to dialogue from an unidentified 1950's Trojan War flic. Even Achilles gets his fifteen minutes of pop culture fame when Harry introduces him as a contestant on the television game show "It's Greek to Me." With confident swagger, Achilles (wonderfully played by the virtuosic Rasta Thomas) aces questions on historical trivia with the acuity of a Jeopardy veteran—at least until confronted with the weighty question of whether it's better to die in the glory of battle, or to live safely in shame. And it's hard to ignore the camp factor of Achilles taking a feline stroll around the stage in a glitzy pair of stilettos as he and Patrocolus (Miguel Anaya) share an intimate moment.

Move is judicious with the high camp, however, and the bulk of the piece is a mix of Graham inspired ensemble work and stylized Greco-Roman wrestling and kickboxing, all expertly delivered by Catherine Cabeen, Blakeley White-McGuire, Corbin Popp, Kevin Scarpin, Heather Walden and Martha Graham Company principal dancer Katherine Crockett as Helen. The skill of Move's dancers cannot be overstated when gauging the show's success. Thomas has the perfect youthful arrogance for the role of Achilles and balances his explosive precision with a subtle softness. Anaya is Thomas' counterpoint as the consummate adoring companion and Crockett looks every statuesque inch a Helen as reigning club queen. Move, an excellent dancer in his own right, understands that his work requires a high level of professionalism in order to read well and he's cast his piece accordingly.

When Move really hits his creative stride, however, there are moments of poetic beauty such as when Achilles is told of the death of Patrocolus and comforted by his horse, the bare-breasted Cabeen wearing white mane-like tresses on her forearms and little else. Cabeen tenderly nuzzles Achilles' side in a wash of moonlight that's a cool drink after the flash and black leather of earlier sections. And there's poignant grace in the scene when the dead Patrocolus is mourned by Helen and the three women. As in a pieta, they stand over his body in sad stillness while mechanized flapping birds rest in their palms as symbols of the life that has left his body. In a final striking image, as Harry sings "Fade Away and Radiate" with world weary depth, Thomas is the ghostly immortal warrior standing under a shower of fluttering golden glitter. These visual gems are Move's forte. Woven together by the clever use of Harry as an authentic singing, speaking goddess of the times, Move's imagery lingers in the mind's eye like a sense memory and gives the piece its soul and weight.

\* For those of you whose Greek mythology is a little musty, Patrocolus, Achilles' friend and longtime lover, is killed while battling the Trojans. Achilles is devastated and avenges the death by killing the Trojan general Hector and beating back the Trojans. Achilles is then killed off by Paris and released to the Elysian Fields to frolic in spiritual bliss with Patroclus.

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