

Li Chiao-Ping's "Rise Over Run" fills the Wisconsin Institutes for Discovery with intriguing movements and questions

by **KATIE REISER**
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KAT CAMERON

Li Chiao-Ping's *Rise Over Run*

Surprises abounded at the **Wisconsin Institutes for Discovery** on Friday as **Li Chiao-Ping** and her **dance company** presented a program of modern dance set in more than a dozen sites throughout the building. A **complex undertaking** in a complex that's a mixture of public and private spaces, *Rise Over Run: Off the Wall Dances*, invites



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audiences to view dance by moving through WID, guided by ushers. In the process, they get to observe the role these different settings play in her work. The [program](#) will be presented four times on May 10 (1, 3, 7 and 9 p.m.) and two final times on May 11 (1 and 3 p.m.).

By leaving behind the familiar confines of the Margaret H'Doubler Performance Space at UW Lathrop Hall and Promenade Hall at Overture Center, Li, the chair of the [UW Dance Department](#) and a [WID Fellow](#), could explore issues of space and place in different ways. It's clear from the long list of thank yous and acknowledgements in the program that *Rise Over Run* is a collaboration involving many people.

The program opener, "-valence," is presented in the round in the DeLuca Forum. It is probably the most traditional theater-style experience of the program, in that the audience is seated in chairs surrounding the cast, who danced in an illuminated circle in the center. Dressed in sunny yellow, the dancers often return to a series of gestures that, when plucked from everyday transactions, seem more remarkable. For example, a turned-down thumb pulls an invisible thread upward at one point. Li's choreography often employs very challenging floorwork that appears deceptively simple and smooth. In "-valence," the dancers slide over each other, wiggling and scooching across the floor.

We get a brief interlude of feet scurrying about as a wall is partially raised. Then a trio of dancers emerge, enclosed in the "curved breakout room." It's like witnessing a private ceremony when Lydia Kantor, Hiroki Koba and Li come together after circling around in a series of leaps, stacking their fists in a tower.

On a feather bed nestled between trees in the Atrium, Lix Sexe performs the solo "Rust/Rise/Rest" to a collage of sounds. Initially, she refuses to leave the embrace of her comfy bed, but then she rises and explores the perimeter. Afterward, she returns to her nest with force, literally diving onto the bed. I've seen this solo before in a theater, so it was interesting to see it again, now in a little faux forest in the middle of a building where scientific research is occurring.

Next a quartet of dancers perform on, under and off a bench that juts out from a curved wall. Because of where I was located, the dancers I observed most closely were Katie Apsey and Brianna Z. Kauer. I found this piece the most satisfying use of the building's architectural elements. Apsey and Kauer pull themselves up the wall, finding little toeholds along the way. Their bodies splay against the wood on diagonals. Later, they cantilever out from the wall and then, after sliding underneath the bench, hoist themselves back onto the bench in a rolling motion.

The audience's attention is soon directed upstairs to a balcony, where a group of move together slowly before dropping leaves on strings, which cascade gently near dancers waiting below in the atrium. Dressed like edgy Degas ballerinas, they dance on the furniture, tumbling over couches and playing a game of musical chairs on an upholstered bench. Things get rowdier as they engage in some lobby parkour. They quickly add sweatshirts and red Converse sneakers before beginning "Approaching 1,618," in which they lumber and glide across a walkway floor before sliding into a wall where they are replaced by the group from upstairs. The latter of dancers swap their plain tunics for elegant black evening apparel and rubbery animal masks.

Downstairs, in "Cline," the dancers lounge on benches that surround a placid pool, limbs languidly draped before the group gather at the foot of the stairs. They are surrounded by the masked group, who pantomime social niceties before creating an archway with their bodies for other dancers to pass through.

All

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Two dances are performed simultaneously. At this point, the audience takes turns and switches locations. First I watched a quartet dance below WID's [Living Environments Laboratory](#) virtual-reality CAVE, where Ross Tredinnick's visual design of factories and steam pipes accompany a quartet maneuvering underneath a support platform. Clanging, banging industrial sounds from Amy Denio's "Construction" provide a driving and percussive score for both dances. Next I watched four dancers shuffle along a ledge attached to windows that open onto a massive server room. Scrunched up against each other, the dancers move as a unit, finally peel away from each other and exploring their limited space. Then they create a stack, with one dancer on top of the other, before sliding off the wall and rolling away down the hall.

Finally, Li performs a perilous solo back at the staircase. I won't reveal her costume or the text she recites, as that would spoil a quirky and surprisingly touching moment. As she slid *up* the staircase and smoothly waved her legs around in a headstand at the top of the steps, I was reminded what a strong and supple mover she is. Her tale is a poignant one of identity. It addresses what we think about ourselves when altered by others and our environment.

I admire Li's willingness to leave the comfort of a traditional proscenium setting to explore the possibilities at WID. At times, the new work was completely satisfying (in particular "mx+b"), but I got a little cranky about jockeying for a good position to view the dancing and wished that the ushers had been a bit more clear with their instructions. (Perhaps they were trying to be unobtrusive.)

I was drawn to Rachel Krinsky's lush dancing, and I was also impressed with Sexe's daring approach and the toughness underneath her grace. Apsey and Kauer were compelling and pulled off the rigors of Li's work with ease and a sense of playfulness.

Two fun moments came from unsuspecting members of the public who happened upon the performance accidentally. As the audience stood in the atrium, watching the action above on a balcony, a man walked down Johnson Street outside of the building, curious about the large crowd gathered inside with their eyes cast upward. (For a moment, the audience was part of the art.) Later, a man emerged from the elevators, just as the group in animal masks were about to board, which must have been quite astonishing for him.



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Dec 11, 2015

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