

**DANCE THEATER WORKSHOP**  
**LAVA** SARAH EAST JOHNSON **HIGH TIDE**  
 MAY 1-18 at 7:00 pm (THURS-SUN)

# the DANCE insider

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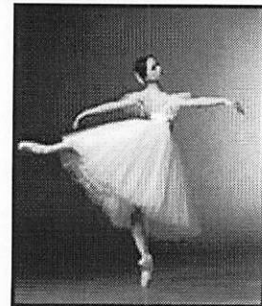
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Flash Review 3, 5-22: Stone Mush  
 "Afrofuturistic" at the Kitchen

By Anne Zuerner  
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NEW YORK -- In a valiant attempt to match many outstanding talents in an all-encompassing, multi-media production (the Kitchen's "major" production for 2003), "Afrofuturistic," seen Saturday, embraced so much that it could hold on to nothing. Despite the presence of such shining stars as Tracie Morris (poet), David Thomson (dancer/choreographer), and Graham Haynes (composer), "Afrofuturistic" went nowhere and communicated very little. I could tell the text was thick with meaning, I could feel Thomson's energy brimming beneath his cool facade, yet none of these redeeming qualities could manage to reach the audience.

Both Morris and Thomson have unforgettable voices, so rich and incredibly expressive, but while speaking a text so dense with allusions, no voice could help the viewer follow along from one stanza to the next. A character named Sirena kept popping up and having sexual encounters, something about dystopia whizzed by, the costumes made cliché references to futuristic fashion, the music was reminiscent of the theme from "2001: A Space Odyssey," yet other than that, it was hard to latch onto anything. It all slipped by inconspicuously: distinct, yet incommunicative, like a foreign language. Even the performers seemed bored and unable to connect. Energy was low, almost



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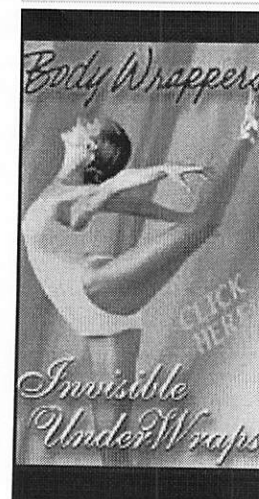
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sleepy.

Although I admire David Thomson's dancing, I could not figure out his connection to the text, as it unfurled from Morris's lips. At times he appeared to be some sort of sidekick, following Morris, supporting her, responding to her, vocally and physically. Other times he seemed to perform choreography from an entirely different piece, but for some science fiction reason, his hologram appeared on the kitchen stage.

Each component would have breathed easier on its own. As a collaboration, the connection between the elements seemed contrived, as if the performers themselves did not know what to make of all the layers, smothering each other. The text would be better read, than heard spoken, allowing the reader time to anchor herself and dissect meaning. Hearing the text for "Afrofuturistic" spoken was a bit like seeing "The Sound and the Fury" set as a play: unless you are a Faulkner scholar, it is totally disorienting. All the ingredients for "Afrofuturistic" oozed potential, but when they were stirred in the futuristic cauldron, they became mush.

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