

ALBUQUERQUE JOURNAL



Funny Fusion of Footage, Footwork

Sunday, March 2, 2014

By Kathaleen Roberts



If you go

WHAT: "An Evening Back at North Fourth" by Cathy Weis

WHEN: 8 p.m. Friday and Saturday, March 7-8

WHERE: North Fourth Theater, North Fourth Arts Center, 4904 Fourth NW

HOW MUCH: \$10/general; \$8/students and seniors. See vsartsnm.org or call 344-4542

Cathy Weis returns to the North Fourth Art Center for performances and a dance residency.

Cathy Weis crafted a career melding film and dance.

The peculiar magic resulting from this often funny fusion will bring her back to Albuquerque in a new multimedia piece at the North Fourth Theater Friday and Saturday.

Known for weaving monitors and cameras with movement, the classically trained Weis turned to technology after being diagnosed with multiple sclerosis.

"I had to stop what I was doing," the dancer, choreographer and videographer said in a telephone interview from New York. "I went into a big black hole of depression. When I came out of it, I had a real need to make things. It was a way of doing something positive."

In refusing to surrender to her limitations, Weis became one of the first choreographers to explore the potential of fusing footage with footwork. A contemporary/modern dancer nurtured in the Merce Cunningham tradition at Vermont's Bennington College, (the modern dance nexus whose faculty once included Martha Graham), Weis grew up in Louisville, Ky., where she performed with the Louisville Ballet from 1961 to 1966. After moving to New York in 1983, she documented her dance and performance artist friends as a videographer. She logged hundreds of hours of footage, capturing the spirit of the streets and stages of New York across a 20-year span.

She transitioned those skills into performance, thus feeding her incessant drive for creativity.

"Making things was a joy," she said. "It wasn't fraught with stress. I developed a voice. Later, it became trendy to do that. It came out of a life need."

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In Weis' vocabulary, a monitor may resemble eerie molten plasma culled straight from a seance. A dancer's diaphanous jacket may double as both visual subject and creator. A trapezoidal screen projected onto another may transform into a lithe dancer. The camera work sometimes doubles the bodies and fragments them into staccato freeze-frames in a maverick motion of both funk and fairy tale.

Weis brought this sensibility to North Fourth in both a workshop and a performance in 2006. "I had such an interesting time that when they called me two years ago, I really wanted to do it," she said. "Getting out of New York in March – what could be better? – so I jumped at the chance."

The artist will spend a weeklong residency with North Fourth's resident Buen Viaje Dance Company ("Good Journey" in Spanish) developing the piece, along with a new solo created for a character in her own repertory and a solo from an earlier piece, "The Bottom Fell Out of the Tub."

Weis will perform with another dancer and a drummer/keyboardist.

"It's like abstract expressionism," she said. "Once you see it, you know it."

Weis is a Guggenheim Fellow and a New York Dance and Performance Award winner. She insists her health remains "good."

"Dance is a wonderful thing," she said. "It saved me and it made me strong."