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Choreographer's Evening at Walker Art Center

By **claudepeck** | NOVEMBER 28, 2011 – 12:14PM

By CAROLINE PALMER -- Special to the Star Tribune

**Curator Chris Schlichting. Photo provided by Walker Art Center.**

When 2011 **Choreographer's Evening** curator **Chris Schlichting** took the stage wearing a red Willa Wonka-style velvet coat it was a sure sign that Saturday night's show would be anything but ordinary. And while no golden tickets were given out at the **Walker Art Center** (<http://www.walkerart.org>)'s annual dance showcase, there were a few standout performances among the 12 acts.

Jeffrey Wells, Sam Johnson and **Erin Search-Wells** of **SuperGroup** set "Please Turn Off Your Cell Phones" to a barely audible soundscore of tabloid-style news. Their movements – sped up or fidgety, punctuated by the occasional sneer – remained pure and focused, providing the perfect calm counterpoint to the commentary's fear-mongering.

Jaime Carrera's "Picnic," performed with **Kimberly Lesik**, transformed a pastoral repast into ribald fantasy, with slow motion dancing meant to simulate various sexual acts. The duo's deadpan expressions and unexpectedly graceful gestures revealed a savvy commentary on the lines between private and public behavior.

Kenna Camara-Cottman's "ΚΑΤΕ ΑΝ ΘΥΤΣ" took its inspiration from the history and legacy of the "Divine Nine" (nine Black Greek organizations – fraternities and sororities). Discipline and virtuosity,

underscored with a desire for revolution, defined the crisp contours of this work, one that hopefully will return in an expanded form.

Opera is a new direction for **Mad King Thomas**, the trio of **Tara King**, **Theresa Madaus** and **Monica Thomas**. None of them performed; instead diva **Susan Scalf** channeled her inner Gina Lollobrigida backed by a skivvy-clad chorus. The Italian words consisted of pasta references but “translators” were on hand. As usual MKT made took on feminism, bicycle worship and politics with sharp humor.

Other highlights included **Patrick Scully**’s “Kyrie from the Missa de Beate Virgine,” a delicate trio for **Kevin Kortan**, **Justin Leaf** and **Robert Skafte**, plus **Megan Mayer**’s “Yaw,” a promising glimpse into a new project on the future of space travel. **Hijack**’s latest lengthily titled piece found carefully calibrated release through repetition using the “softly, slowly” refrain from Elton John’s “Tiny Dancer” over and over. They built up tension between deliberate posturing and literally stuck-in-time music.

And then there was **Debbie**, **Secretary**, a group whose members looked suspiciously like **Karen Sherman**, **Morgan Thorson** and **Joanna Furnans**. Hall & Oates, 1980’s-style big hair wigs, and an all-nude Jazzercise-style romp propelled this joyfully anarchic final act of the evening.

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