

San Francisco Chronicle

Leah Garchik, Dec. 11, 2018

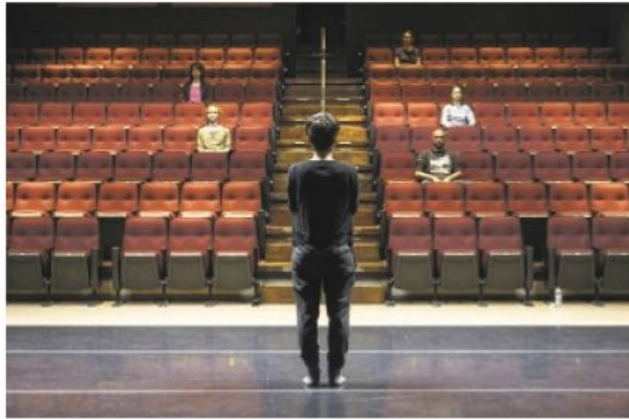
“Of Iron and Diamonds V3: Alone Together” was the title of the work choreographer **Catherine Galasso** created (in collaboration with composer **Dave Cerf**), which was based, written materials said, on **Boccaccio’s** “The Decameron.” Reading about the source, and knowing that the work was third in a series of Galasso pieces that I hadn’t seen before, I took my seat at ODC on Friday, Dec. 7, wondering whether I’d be up to the challenge of appreciating/accessing something so complex.

Created for the ODC site, “Alone Together” turned out to be one of the friendliest dance pieces in memory. The performance space was set up as a rectangle: on one side were the theater seats that are always there; facing them were bleachers in which the audience sat. So we, the viewers, faced rows of what looked like empty seats; in the course of the piece, the seven dancers used those seats to it, hop, slither and drag themselves and each other up, down and across the rows.

If its handle had sounded heavy and dark, the work itself was light and light, and all the more enchanting for it, **bursting with ideas and invention like a treasure chest so packed with jewels that the lid won’t stay down.**

San Francisco Chronicle

Claudia Bauer, Dec. 2, 2018



Dave Cerf

In “Alone Together,” the audience is onstage and the performers are in the seats.

CLAUDIA BAUER'S DANCE PICK

Perspectives will shift at the premiere of Catherine Galasso's “Alone Together,” Thursday through Saturday, Dec. 6-8, at ODC Theater — Galasso is putting her performers in the seats and the audience on the stage. And they're artists worth looking up to: dancers Arletta Anderson, Eric Garcia, Cookie Harrist, Hien Huynh, Phoenicia Pettyjohn and Karla Quintero, plus Millennium School seventh-grader Galicia Stack Lozano. San Francisco composer Dave Cerf created the music and sound design.

There's a bit of a time warp afoot too. “Alone Together” is the third chapter in Galasso's multivalent performance series “Of Iron and Diamonds,” which is inspired by Boccaccio's 14th century story cycle “The Decameron” but draws parallels with our alone-together digital culture and the audience-artist divide. The New York-based Galasso, a former ODC resident artist, has the honor of wrapping up the theater's 2018 season, putting a cap on Julie Potter's outstanding curation.

Catherine Galasso: 8 p.m. Thursday-Saturday, Dec. 6-8. \$30. ODC Theater, 3153 17th St., S.F. 415-863-9834. www.odc.dance/tickets

The comfort of being a face in the crowd in “Alone Together”

Dasha Bulatova, December 6, 2018
RepeatPerformances.org and Piedmont Post

For its final production of the 2018 season, ODC Theater featured *Of Iron and Diamonds V3: Alone Together*, an entertaining piece full of self-conscious humor and dynamic reframing of what it means to perform and to watch. This reversal is built into the theater’s arrangement: the audience sits onstage, facing the tiered seating where much of the action happens. Performed on December 6, the piece opens with audience and performers peering at each other from the across the room, begging the question of who is the watcher and the watched?

Alone Together is the third chapter of former ODC Resident Artist Catherine Galasso’s series of site-specific performances drawing from Boccaccio’s *The Decameron*. Overall, although the connections to the fourteenth-century Italian text (in which ten young people pass the time in isolation from the Black Death by telling tales) are loose, *Alone Together*, created in collaboration with sound designer David Cerf, explores the possibilities of art to connect and

heal communities during a grim time.



From left: Eric Garcia, Karla Quintero, and Cookie Harrist create drama in the theater seats. Photo by Robbie Sweeny.

Indeed, one of the reliefs that *Alone Together* offers is pure entertainment. In a sequence of numbers that evoked Vaudevillian comedy, the cast of Bay Area performers (Arletta Anderson, Eric Garcia,

Cookie Harrist, Hien Huynh, Phoenicia Pettyjohn, Karla Quintero, and Galicia Stack Lozano)

flocks into both familiar and unfamiliar conceptual territory. Galasso and Cerf's "shared language" of cinema builds an abstract, imaginative narrative punctuated by energetic climaxes that drew chuckles of recognition from the audience. The tiered seats and the floor space morphed into what appeared to be a circus, a dodgeball arena, a movie theater, and, most playfully, the keys of a synthesizer. Of course, the details of these settings are left to the imagination.

However, the production is not without its earnest, dramatic moments. The first few movements feature an animated duet and dynamic pas de trois that conjure more direct links to *The Decameron's* stories of unrequited love and tormented love triangles.

A standout dancer is twelve-year old Galicia Stack Lozano, who enters the stage separately with an uncanny, powerful confidence. At times, she appears to lead the flock of dancers, at others she blends into the group, her smaller stature and precise movements ebbing in and out of focus. Galasso's pieces frequently feature dancers outside of the "conventional" age range; previous works in this series have included a sixty-five-year old dancer and Galasso's eight-month old son.



All seven performers in "Alone Together." Photo by Robbie Sweeny.

The final act highlights just to what extent “the fourth wall is not a thing” for Galasso, Cerf, and their collaborators. As the soundscape swells, the performers reach into the seated audience to bring up audience members to walk across the floor and take a seat across the room. They appear to choose at random, asking, “Will you come with me?” Nobody said no.

After sending about half the audience to the tiered seats, the performers distribute themselves in and among the audience at both ends of the theater. The piece ends as it begins, with people watching each other from across the room, this time their connection strengthened by shared experience and humor. In the end, *Alone Together* lives up to Galasso’s statement that “live performance is a very valuable tool of empathy and community.”

DanceViewTimes.com

Separately United

Rita Felciano, December 7, 2018



In 2011 Catherine Galasso finished a residency in San Francisco with the ODC Theater’s commissioned “Bring on the Lumiere”, an intricately structured evocation of the Lumiere brothers and their innovative working with light. It’s a piece that engaged with wit, imagination and some Gallic charm rarely seen on our stages. Then Galasso left for greener pastures. Now she has returned with the world premiere of ‘Alone Together, the third section of “Of Iron and Diamonds V3”, apparently inspired by Boccaccio’s “Decameron”. Looking for one of the poet’s deliciously naughty tales guaranteed disappointment. Instead Galasso offered a smart look at the interdependence between, perhaps, a book and its reader, a storyteller and his/her listeners or, as in this case, performer and audience. She **dissected this theatrical convention with a fine sense of timing, sometimes-dark humor and spirited performers** elicited from local artists Arletta

Anderson, Eric Garcia, Cookie Harrist, Hien Huynh, Phoenicia Pettyjohn, Karla Quintero and

Galicia Stack Lozano. With this new ODC Theater's commission, 'Alone' closed ODC Theater's 2018 season on an ebullient note.

For this one-hour show the audience was arranged in three horizontal rows on the stage while the dancers took over the seating area. My first reaction, I have to confess, was "what a gimmick." I couldn't have been more wrong.

'Alone' started tongue in cheek. Together, in one row halfway up the steep rake, the dancers just sat. They stared at us; we stared at them. Becoming restless, they began to wiggle, look around, and clap tentatively — wanting the "show" to start. The tension between "audience" and "performers" became thicker and thicker until Galasso's cameo gave the signal to start even as a dark bundle of something or other rolled off the stage. Her choreography transformed the theater's seating area into a place of common endeavor and individuality. Two dancers rhythmically started a hopping unison pattern up the center stairs; others joined until the orderly procession exploded into the seats. Arms played a prominent role — wide open ones to stepping in place, angular stretches, or hands surging up from behind seats with *floreo* fingers.

Some sections looked two-pictorial, others suggested narratives. Garcia cradled Harris' head on his lap when Quintero stepped in to check, and the picture froze. Twelve-year old Stack Lozano cartwheeled on to the stage across as if blown in accidentally. A popcorn-eating woman suggested a half-empty movie theater while below her a swimmer certainly seemed at the very least in a pool. One blew bubbles; another played the guitar.

Transformations often looked ambiguous; Ghostly heads popped up and sank; scurrying feet suggested panic; a dancer tumbling over a number of rows could have been dead. Humor came in a number of shades. Seated widely apart, six dancers filled the auditorium with rhythmic breathing. It was evocative yet eerie. Not all the mini-scenes worked equally well but as a totality they created a rich tapestry of moments that flew by like some film editor's work on speed.

The end charmed by its generosity: Huynh's wide-open arms invited us to join the dancers in the seating area even as some of them joined us. The final image suggested harmony and balance. Alone had become a Together. But then that ominous black bundle rolled back in.

With Dave Cerf's original music/sound design, and Grisel GG Torres' Lighting, Galasso had superb collaborators. But what about those empty luminous video screens that stared at us all the way through the show?