

The Village Voice

Color and Light

Sperling creates still pictures via motion

by Deborah Jowitt

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Jody Sperling calls her enterprise Time Lapse Dance because some of her solos riff off the fin-de-siècle artistry of Loïe Fuller, the American who enthralled Paris with her manipulation of exceedingly long silk garments—turning herself, with the help of innovative lighting, into a butterfly, a lily, the spirit of fire. In terms of time-lapse photography, Sperling's magical Fuller-inspired pieces do have the look of natural phenomena—blossoming, evolving, changing shape.

In the lovely new three-part *Debussy Soirée*, Sperling's circular silk garment almost fills the stage. Her brilliant lighting collaborator, David Ferri, stains the swirling fabric blue-green, moon gold, dawn pink, and more, while Sperling, wielding long sticks beneath the fabric, creates huge wings and rippling waves. For "Evening in Granada," the peach-colored calyx that she spins up around herself turns into flames.

Sperling skillfully varies the complex surges and huge foaming curves with simpler effects: gliding, say, with the fabric belled out around her, or dipping and turning to form a pinwheel. And during her 2003 *La Nuit*, to John Cage piano pieces (played, like the Debussy, by Jeffrey Middleton), she keeps altering Michelle Ferranti's intricate black silk dress and cloak to suggest new images—ending, as Fuller could not—by greeting the day in a black bikini and sunglasses. Variety artists of Fuller's day often built an act around a prop or, if hyper-flexible, used their bodies as props. Three antic new trios by Sperling—set to music by Quentin Chiappetta that emphasizes the moves with corny vaudevillian gusto—give such stunts a contemporary twist. In *An Arm and a Leg* and *Cheapest*, three dancers (Kelly Hayes, Lisa Natoli, and Ashley Sowell in the first, Sperling replacing Hayes in the second) form themselves into interlocking shapes (comparisons to early Pilobolus are inevitable). In *An Arm and a Leg*, they're less the show-offs and more like slightly dim-witted creatures who'll try anything that can be accomplished by grabbing their own or a colleague's ankles and twisting, rolling, or hoisting. Suspense enters the picture in *Cheap Hoops*. Will Natoli, Sowell, or Sperling drop the hula hoops they're so artfully swinging around themselves? They're unconcerned, as if keeping these objects aloft were just part of their daily routine.

The program also featured *Sleepy Hollow*, a nicely haunting, somewhat too enigmatic shadow-puppet play by Drama of Works.

<http://www.villagevoice.com/dance/0527,jowitt,65544,14.html>

JUNE 22-28, 2005 VILLAGE VOICE

VOICE CHOICES

SHORTLIST

Dance

Jody Sperling/Time Lapse Dance This jewel box theater is the perfect setting for Sperling's exquisite dances, inspired by the work of modern dance pioneer Loie Fuller, who experimented with fabric and light. Hundreds of yards of billowing silk made into a stunning costume by Michelle Ferrante. David Ferri's lighting refracted into 44 colors, and live piano accompaniment by Jeffrey Middleton surround her new *Debussy Soirée*. Completing the bill is her comic trio *Cheapest* and puppet theater *Drama of Works* with an episode of *Sleepy Hollow*. *Through Sat at 8, Sun at 3, Henry Street Settlement, Harry De Jur Playhouse, 466 Grand, 212-866-1759* ZIMMER