



Photo by Steve Clarke

REVIEWS

Dixie Fun Dance Theatre

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About Not Being Thin

How does one review Dixie FunLee Shulman's "The Thinnest Woman Wins" and not use pejorative words like "fat." Especially when Shulman refers to herself as "fat." How do you tell a "fat" person they are attractive, when that plays into their own longings to be seen that way, thus, exacerbating the problem society's perceptions of body create. Let's be real here. We live in a society that worships "perfect" bodies while it defines that perfection in other than being "fat." We live in a society where endless TV talking heads attached to "perfect" bodies bemoan our "obesity epidemic." Shulman's 2008 Boulder Fringe show in the Naropa Performing Arts Center deals with all of this up front. Do I care? Do you care? Have you heard about this way too often and way too much? Well try working in an art form (dance) where most women have terrible self body images, where anorexia and bulimia can be described as epidemic, and know friends who can be reduced to tears just by thinking about their own bodies – bodies that you see as close to "perfect" -and you just might get a new perspective.

Shulman deals with her own body size in up front, in often poignant, often funny ways. You see she has experienced both ends of the situation, growing up as a svelte, award winning, and oh so "perfect" drum majorette, and – by the time she was a dance major in college – blossoming into a "large" woman. She told that story in voice, movement, and video in "The Thinnest Woman Wins" – all the while relating it to society's love of "thin," of beauty as defined by "beauty" contests, and of the anguish that creates within. She dances naked for over twenty minutes. Really naked! Not dim-lighted—can-you-guess-I'm-naked, but in a full, brightly-lighted-wash-naked with breasts bouncing and swaying, and her butt jiggling. As she dances she comments on her body, about how she sees it, about how she thinks others see it. Are her large breasts

“perky?” - or are they just turgid due to the fact she is now a nursing mother. Will they “dangle” when the milk is gone? Why do women shave their pubic hair? Is it because men are seeking child brides? Shulman even reveals her current weight. 191 pounds. I hope you all know how hard it is for a “heavy” woman to reveal her weight. Shulman claims that weight is the highest hers has ever been, but that she is also the most content she has ever been.

Shulman puts the “problems” of female body image, and of body size out there with no apologies for herself, or condemnations of society. She basically states facts. Any condemnations are in how her audience deals with those facts. She offers no solutions, asks for no tolerance – just states the facts. Personally I despair in dealing with the problem. We live in a society that seems hard wired to see “fat” as less-than-best – pejorative. But just maybe “fat” people can learn to see themselves as way more than “fat.” And maybe we in society can see people for all of what they are - see beyond size - and honor what is within. You cannot see Shulman’s show now. Her last 2008 Fringe performance was on August 21st. But, take any opportunity to see that show elsewhere if you can.

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