

to Dance

Mind under the microscope

Choreographer's brain scans inspire her newest work

Judi Lomask wants to invite you inside her mind. Literally.

As the founder, director and choreographer of the science-inspired San Francisco dance company Capacitor, she's always looking for interesting convergences between



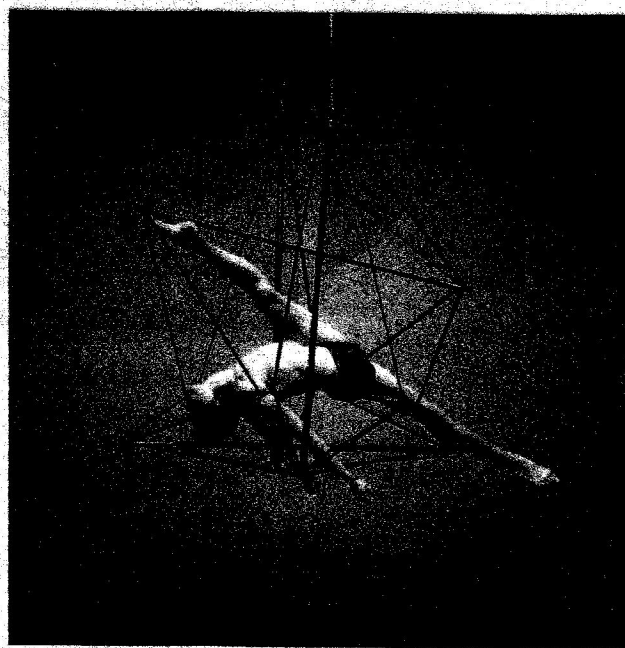
ANDREW GILBERT
DANCE CARD

creativity and cutting-edge technology. For her latest multimedia production, "Synaptic Motion,"

which premieres at Yerba Buena Center for the Arts on Sept. 18-21, she put herself under the proverbial microscope and ended up using her own brain activity as her muse.

"I'd design these three-dimensional movement sculptures, and I was always curious, why does that work?" Lomask said as her 12-week-old baby cooed and gurgled in the background. "Why can I design a 7-foot metal object in my head, and when it's built it roughly works? That's what launched this project. I always start with something I'm curious about."

The tools to observe the blood flow and electrical impulses that accompany our thoughts can't be acquired at RadioShack, at least not yet. So Lomask got in touch with UC San Francisco's Gazzaley Lab to capture her mind at work during the act of choreography. Working with lead neuroscientist Adam Gazzaley and engineer John Fesenko,



CAPACITOR

The science-inspired dance company Capacitor will present "Synaptic Motion," a new work by Judi Lomask, at the Yerba Buena Center in San Francisco.

who specialize in calibrating the neural mechanisms of memory and attention, she underwent two rounds of functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI), a procedure that measures changes in blood flow associated with brain activity.

"I invited a dancer, Christina Lind, to come with me," Lomask said. "I closed my eyes and started working on a piece, a free improvisation, and another piece with a lot of repetition involved. After this process we went into another room, and I taught Christina what I thought of, which became a contemporary ballet solo that happens halfway through 'Synaptic Motion.' The fMRI machine was loud, so it's an intense solo."

The piece really came together in the aftermath of her lab sessions.

Working with collaborators Mary Franck, Wesley Grubb and Johan Bichel

Lindgaard, visual artists who have created video projections for screens, shaped like neurons, they transformed the data into an immersive visualization of the creative process, with a sound score by Danish composer Toni Martin Dobrzanski and a set designed by Erik Walker. Featuring a cast that includes two contortionists, an acrobat, a rapper and five dancers, "Synaptic Motion" makes Lomask's brain sound like a pretty entertaining place to hang out.

Interested in fostering further discussion about the work, Lomask has arranged free discussions before each performance with some of the scientists and interdisciplinary collaborators involved with "Synaptic Motion," starting on Sept. 18 with filmmaker RJ Muna and robotics designer Vytas SunSpiral.

At the center of Lomask's quest is inspir-

ing her audiences to think about thinking. In the program for "Synaptic Motion" she's included a series of statements about brain function, such as "Actions and perceptions involve billions of neurons interacting with one another. Your habitual action patterns are strengthened the more you use them. This is why breaking habits is hard — the synapses that form those connections have grown to be tightly bound."

"The show has been an interesting meditation on what my brain is doing," Lomask says. "Becoming more aware of how you're thinking, thinking about thoughts, is something meditators have been doing forever. But I wanted to take another step, putting them into the objects, movements, textures that are in the show."

Details: 8 p.m. Sept. 18-19, 5 and 8 p.m. Sept. 20, 2 p.m. Sept. 21; Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, San Francisco; \$25-\$30, 415-978-2787, www.ybca.org.

RECOMMENDED: The consistently inspired choreographer Jo Kreiter's Flyaway Productions presents the world premiere of "Multiple Mary and Invisible Jane," an aerial dance on an 80-foot wall in San Francisco's Tenderloin neighborhood based on the experience of older homeless women. Created in collaboration with award-winning composer and vocalist Pamela Z and journalist Rose Aguilar, the free performances run Sept. 12-20 on a wall at Hastings College of the Law at 333 Golden Gate Ave. Details: <http://flyawayproductions.com>.

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