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THEATER REVIEW | 'THE MOMENTUM'

## Life Is an Existential Cabaret, My Friend

By RACHEL SALTZ

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Photo: Max Ruby

“The Momentum”: Geoffrey Decas O’Donnell, left, Jordan Seavey and Boo Killebrew, writers and performers, at the Laurie Beechman Theater.

Were you attacked by a Rottweiler? Has your heart been ripped open? Relax. Pain is a myth.

Or so says the momentum, a kind of self-help program that cures what ails you. And what ails the young urbanites of “The Momentum,” a sort of existential cabaret performed with minimal means at the Laurie Beechman Theater — itself a no-frills cabaret, with a small stage and tables — is not so unusual. They suffer from unmet expectations, romantic disappointments gay and straight, and a lingering sense of ill-being.

The show, which neatly divides into two sections, begins with its three writer-actors — Geoffrey Decas, Jordan Seavey and Boo Killebrew — singing the cure’s praises: “When I’m riding the momentum I feel like a dolphin that just killed a great white shark,” one says. Delivered in the language of 12 Steps and pop psychology, this first part is satire, but gently so. The performers are less interested in mocking the will to euphoria than in showing the pain that underlies it.

Because that pain is not a myth. In the second section, each actor delivers a monologue — personal and specific — that acutely describes it. Love affairs sour; personal truths cannot be wished away.

“The Momentum” won the 2010 FringeNYC Overall Excellence Award in the best-play category. And much in this CollaborationTown production, directed by Lee Sunday Evans, is excellent, beginning with the cast. Mr. Decas sets the standard with his opening hymn to the momentum. He projects not snark, but a beleaguered sweetness, showing us the yearning that sparks belief.

That earnestness is ultimately what is most appealing and disarming about “The Momentum.” The sardonic first section may run out of ideas, its writing not the equal of its acting. (A long bit about a bunny falls flat, though it receives the most laughs.) But the second part redeems the first, making it more interesting in hindsight.

The concluding monologues build in intensity, culminating in that of Ms. Killebrew, a natural [storyteller](#), who paints a detailed, emotionally alive portrait of a breakup. As with Mr. Seavey’s and Mr. Decas’s solos, the topic isn’t groundbreaking. That seems to be the point: Pain is ordinary, bedrock. Let’s talk about it together, not wish it away with platitudes.