

# The New York Times

## Dance

DANCE REVIEW | ALEXANDRA BELLER/DANCES

### Happy Ending? It Can Be Just 'The End'



Ruby Washington/The New York Times

Members of Alexandra Beller/Dances in "what comes after happy" at the Abrons Art Center, performed on a program with "egg."

By CLAUDIA LA ROCCO

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In the chaotic pause between premieres by Alexandra Beller/Dances at the Abrons Arts Center on Thursday night, the crowd got a motivational speech and fortune cookies. Mine said, "You feel close to everyone in the world" — the opposite of what would soon occur in "what comes after happy."

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Full of props and pop songs, this hourlong collection of vignettes deals in isolation and missed connections. A woman digs into a bag of chips with only a flickering television for company, embodied by a shifting cast of dancers lip-synching to infomercials, old movies and fitness shows. A post-first-date phone call founders, Ms. Beller's muscular, gestural movements saying what words can't in sharp, aborted phrases. Faced with various naked desires he cannot fulfill, a man blurts, "I'm gonna go," and then does.

In the end, everything goes, various curtains and screens

rising until the stage is denuded, and the house lights come on. It is an elegant, surprising ending, leaving the audience alone with an unsettling aftermath. This day-after feeling is perhaps something of a commentary from Ms. Beller about what it is like to build a body of

work that is forever disappearing.

Not everything works so well in this scuffling, endearing piece, which could use more editing. Ms. Beller sometimes goes for loud, predictable resolutions, especially tangles of yelling bodies. She also overplays jokes, including a section in which an unheeding [yoga](#) practitioner turns her fellows into a human jungle gym.

But many of her choices are smart, including her fine dancers. They slide with aplomb between comic-pathetic exchanges and Ms. Beller's full-bodied, voluptuous choreography.

Ms. Beller's aplomb unravels in the other premiere, "egg," an ode to motherhood and its attendant gifts, exhaustion and distraction. As she scrambles and lunges and multitasks in a sea of fragile, rolling eggs, she keeps yelling, "I got you!"

But no one, of course, has her. The dance, by turns sweet and poignant, feels like a private affair, a catharsis that doesn't quite work as theater.

Still, it is always good to see an artist pushing at awkward, deeply felt realities, and Ms. Beller does so with a generous spirit. She also starts the evening with a masterstroke: a preshow brooding electric guitar solo by Robert Poss. Never hurts to butter up your audience.

*Alexandra Beller/Dances performs through Sunday at the Abrons Arts Center, 466 Grand Street, at Pitt Street, Lower East Side, (212) 598-0400, [henrystreet.org/arts](http://henrystreet.org/arts).*