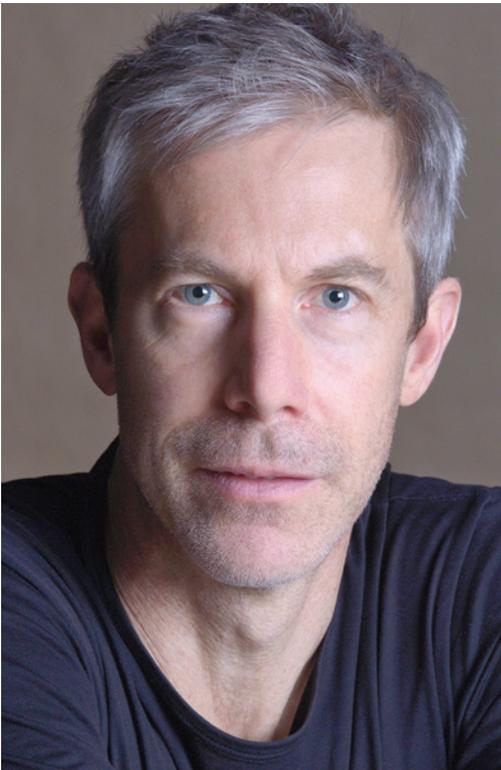




SHOW AND TELL

**CHOREOGRAPHER AND DANCER
CRYSTAL PITE AND ACTOR
JONATHON YOUNG COMBINE FORCES
TO PRESENT A NEW THEATRICAL-BASED
WORK, *Revisor***

BY HANNAH LEE



CONTEMPORARY DANCE can sometimes be thought of as an intimidating cultural pursuit for audience members who worry they just might not get it. Crystal Pite dances circles around that perception. The Vancouver-based choreographer opens up this world to the uninitiated with her irreverent, dizzying originality, her bold approach to movement, her theatrical sensibility, and her use of narrative and multimedia elements. But for Pite, accessibility does not mean dumbed down; those in the know still thrill at the risks taken in her work and its sublime achievements.

Pite, 48, has been dancing since she was 8 years old, starting with tap—although these days, that tap dancing is as metaphorical as it is literal.

Internationally in-demand, Pite is a busy woman: She has run her dance company, Kidd Pivot, out of Vancouver since 2002.

She's created more than 50 works for various companies, such as the Nederlands Dans Theater (who performed her work at CPA last year), Paris Opera Ballet, and the Royal Ballet in London; and her collaborative performance, "Betroffenheit," with Electric Theatre Company, has just won an Olivier award—Britain's version of a Tony.

Increasingly, her projects are at a scale to match their prestige, with roles for as many as 54 dancers (*The Seasons' Canon*) or, in the case of *Polaris*, more than 60.

But literature has sparked many of the works Pite does for Kidd Pivot; one of the best known is her acclaimed *Tempest Replica*, inspired by Shakespeare's *The Tempest*.

Now, in one of the most anticipated new productions of 2019, Pite and co-founder of Electric Company Theatre, Jonathon Young, are back with their second production together—*Revisor*, a multifaceted piece co-commissioned by Carolina Performing Arts.

Whereas their first production, *Betroffenheit*, mined personal tragedy—a devastating loss in Young's own family—*Revisor* takes a less autobiographical direction, playing with stylized political farce. Continuing the exploration of words, theater, and dance that the pair started with *Betroffenheit*, it takes the same kind of dazzling risks.

Young began working on and envisioning *Revisor* while touring for *Betroffenheit*. He had long been fascinated with Nikolai Gogol's 1836 play *The Inspector General*, which centers on a poor civil servant, whom the residents of a small town mistake for a high-ranking official. He milks the false identity for all it's worth, accepting bribes and getting drunk off power before ultimately fleeing.

Revisor is the Russian word for government inspector. Playing on that word, Young made his version about a "revisor" who revises legal texts. He also looked at how Gogol's satire of greed and political corruption was revised over time, and then he and Pite went on to thoroughly deconstruct and revise it into something absurd and, sometimes, abstract.

The finished piece features eight Kidd Pivot dancers moving to an adapted script, which has been recorded

by Canadian actors—the dialogue sometimes remixed and distorted. The spoken text creates a kind of musical score.

For Pite, the attraction of *The Inspector General* centered around trying to adapt the farce to dance. The choreographer says she wasn't familiar with the Gogol play until

Young told her about it. In her work with Young, she's always diving deeper, pushing the ways that dance and theater can intersect.

In this piece, Pite loves that the dancers get to explore the story and the character, and see what happens when they enter more abstract territory.

And while this performance reveals pretty dark thoughts on the human condition, the delivery is meant to be humorous.

The possibilities the artists are finding are endless. Pite and Young are creating a complex new vocabulary for their respective art forms, sparking ideas in each other, and finding fresh territory between theater and dance. *Betroffenheit*, and now *Revisor*, seem to be only the beginning. ■



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