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San Francisco Chronicle

## Robert Moses' Kin envelops lyrical, polemical dance

Michael Wade Simpson, Special to The Chronicle

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**Robert Moses'** Kin: Program runs 8 p.m. Thursday-Saturday, 2 p.m. and 7 p.m. Sunday. Kanbar Hall, Jewish Community Center of San Francisco, 3200 California St. \$18-\$26. For tickets, call (415) 292-1233 or visit [www.robertmoseskin.org](http://www.robertmoseskin.org).



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Rare is the dance artist who can pull off the mix of art and politics. Local treasure **Robert Moses**, with his dance company, Kin, not only creates some of the most gorgeous movement onstage anywhere, but also is committed to tackling ideas of race, class, culture and gender, and he does so successfully.

Appearing as the first dance company onstage at the 450-seat venue, Kanbar Hall, at the remodeled Jewish Community Center of San Francisco, **Moses** opened a two-week performance run last weekend that ran the gamut from lush and lyrical pure dance to the more polemical. Unfortunately, the new theater, which has the perfect audience capacity for a modern dance group such as **Moses'**, offers a limited playing space and resembles a nicely appointed stage at a junior high school auditorium. **Moses'** work deserves to be seen in a much more spacious setting.

"Biography" (2003), a discussion from a 1961 radio program, featured the voices of James Baldwin, Lorraine Hansberry, Langston Hughes and others, discussing, "The Negro in American Culture." **Moses'** ebb and flow of strident, nearly violent phrases followed by walking patterns, lines and stillness, complemented the dynamic exchange of ideas in the sound score. One fascinating image was that of two white male dancers licking and preening the prostrate bodies of blacks, a kind of erotic, vampire pieta.

"Other Gods," a world premiere, featured an elegiac orchestral score by Georgs Pelecis and beautiful dancing by four couples. **Moses** is consistently brilliant at making up ways of approaching space, momentum and the body, and at the same time he understands the need to offer formality, lines rather than pure momentum, and clarity. Kin is a diverse group of strong, accomplished dancers. Here, and throughout the evening, Katherine Wells, long and lanky, and Amy Foley, powerful and petite, offered extremely clear and confident performances while Ramon Ramos Alayo and Carlos Gonzalez offered a particularly relaxed athleticism that was exciting to watch.

"Cause," a section of an evening-length work in progress, is a

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poetry slam with dancing. Created in collaboration with Youth Speaks, a local nonprofit spoken-word organization, **Moses** explored the "first stirrings of hate" using the emotional and provocative live performances of poets Emiliano Bourgois-Chacon, Luke Brekke-Meisner, Katri Foster, Ise Lyfe, Jason Mateo and Tristan Ching. Here, no dancing could possibly compete with the stunning power of these young writers, presenting their own stories, their anger. **Moses** simply sits them on a stool, surrounded by the crowd of his dance company and lets them go. The dancing interludes, with movement as nearly dense and violent as life on the street, looked appropriately uncomfortable on the small, crowded stage.

Also on the program was an enigmatic excerpt from "Tasogare" (the Japanese word for twilight), with original music performed live by the Somei Yoshino Taiko Ensemble. **Moses'** Kin included Alayo, Tristan Ching, Bliss Kohlmyer Downman, Todd Eckert, Foley, Tianne Frias, Gonzalez, Michael Separovich, Raissa Simpson and Wells.

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