

High Winds, a Rock Star Moment and a Touch of the Velvet Underground



Julietta Cervantes for The New York Times

Amanda Loulaki and Levi Gonzalez are on a double bill at the Kitchen. Ms. Loulaki, above, dances in her piece “Untitled,” which uses large fans.

Amanda Loulaki and Levi Gonzalez at the Kitchen

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Amanda Loulaki and Levi Gonzalez deserve to have their own evenings of work, so that their quietly loaded dances have the time and space to resonate with their audiences. But if they are to be presented on a shared bill, they might as well be with each other, as they were at the opening of a run at the Kitchen on Thursday night, when each unveiled a premiere.

Ms. Loulaki's "Untitled" unfolds like an aftermath. The gritty black stage, designed by Joanna Seitz, is studded with objects: two orange industrial-strength fans, a leafy tree in a bright blue pot and a triangular stack of cinderblocks. It evokes images of a ruined courtyard, and [Ms. Loulaki](#) takes her time, slowly filling this place with her charismatic, sensual energy.

She is joined by Georgios Kontos's subtle, at times ominous sound score, which includes a seductive guitar and cello track by Giannis Aggelakas. (Ms. Loulaki, in a spotlight, has a stylized rock-star moment with it, speaking into a microphone as one of the fans blows her long dark hair across her face and bare shoulder.) Joe Levasseur's lighting becomes another presence in the room, shifting the actual space, creating its own moods.

It's a rich combination but spare, almost lonely. You have to lean in to catch Ms. Loulaki's incremental physical adjustments; it is as if she had stripped away as much material as she could, or perhaps had it stripped from her, and is now trying to make sense of a familiar but entirely changed reality.

We get a spoken phrase here and there, in her accented English (she is a longtime New Yorker, though born in Crete). And we get a lifted arm, a curving back, a body slowly scooting along the floor. These all feel like remnants. They are also, perhaps, hints of what might come.

What came after the intermission was a different, more explicitly naked vulnerability, in [Mr. Gonzalez's](#) "Counterfeit Scenario." Created with input from the terrifically honed dancer Natalie Green, this duet explores a host of relationships and power dynamics: between performer and choreographer, between artist and audience, between self and self.

As Mr. Gonzalez's title underlines, all performances are artificial on some level. Here he attempts to exploit and subvert that, presenting "Counterfeit Scenario" as something of a rehearsal in which he — and Ms. Green, following his verbal prompts — is

trying to build the finished performance. Of course, they are doing so inside a show that is already fully produced, with costumes by Emily Roysdon (including a handsome deep blue uniform of sorts for Mr. Gonzalez), a spacious score by Justin Luchter and voluptuous, theatrical lighting design by Mr. Levasseur.

Mr. Gonzalez, who has a long and impressive history as a dancer in other people's work, of course knows what it is to be in Ms. Green's shoes, and the two are teasing out all sorts of interesting questions. But where "Counterfeit Scenario" really sings is at the level of the heart.

"I guess we're really killing the momentum of the piece here," Mr. Gonzalez said late in the game, staring out at the audience with a face both sly and windblown. Ms. Green waited for an external cue, he waited for an internal one, and the audience waited for something, anything.

What came, a small, blooming dance set to "I'll Be Your Mirror" by the Velvet Underground (oh, pop songs, forever destroyers of dances!), was just what needed to come. It was worth the wait.

Amanda Loulaki and Levi Gonzalez perform through Saturday at the Kitchen, 512 West 19th Street, Chelsea; (212) 255-5793, thekitchen.org.