

IS OUT. WRONG IS IN!

THIS SPRING BREAK, CHECK OUT
THE PLAY THAT GOES
WRONG

BROADWAY'S FUNNIEST
AND LONGEST-RUNNING PLAY



BROADWAYGOESWRONG.COM
& LYCEUM THEATRE, 149 WEST 45TH STREET

PHOTOS BY MATTHEW MURPHY



BRIAN ROGERS

Ripples and waves: The choreographer Anna Sperber in her "Wealth From the Salt Seas," a new work at the Chocolate Factory.

Mysteries That Remain Intact

THE WORLD THAT ANNA SPERBER — performer and choreographer — inhabits onstage is not yours or mine. It's private: a mystery to outsiders from first to last.

Yet she makes it immediately compelling. You watch in hope of understanding her better. Instead, in "Wealth From the Salt Seas," presented this week at the Chocolate Factory Theater in Queens, she remains opaque, an unknown species keen to remain unknowable. The audience sits on four sides of the action: Even when she comes closest to you, she feels remote.

Ms. Sperber ranges from being quietly withdrawn to obsessively intense. It's a pleasure to watch her face, her physique, her variety. At the start, in silence, she walks to a corner of the stage — stands, turns, looks askance. Then she places the back of her hand to her neck while she looks to one side. Is the gesture one of mild anxiety? Maybe, but her thoughts seem di-

Wealth From the Salt Seas

Through March 31 at the Chocolate Factory Theater, Queens; 212-352-3101, chocolatefactorytheater.org.

rected elsewhere. Her eyes continue to suggest some other preoccupation while her hands start to trace the top and bottom of her pelvis. Soon she travels across the stage: a few spins this way, a few that. Who is she? What's driving her?

But "Wealth From the Salt Seas" tells no story. And, although this hourlong piece changes Ms. Sperber's character, it does not deepen it. After this beginning in silence, the piece becomes a collaboration with the singer-musician Gelsey Bell — who shares the stage, is similarly dressed and is evidently a kindred spirit. Some of Ms. Bell's music is taped, but some consists of remarkable vocalism.

"Wealth" proceeds in sections, as if the

two women were switching from one task to another, all equally mysterious, but some failing to sustain interest. Among the highlights was Ms. Sperber's way of standing on the spot, hands clasped high above her head, while sending rapid vibrations from her knees and heels. And in a quietly thrashing solo — helplessly driven — she paced to and fro within a limited space, bending low from the waist in a fixed rhythm during a sequence in which she also shook her head rapidly from side to side.

In another moment, the two women shook large metal rectangles between their hands, so that the material both gave off sound and reflected it, gradually reaching a climax, then ebbing from it. It recalled an earlier passage in which they had picked up small, tintinnabulating obelisks. All this was wonderfully strange — until it started to become schematically strange. The spell of the early sections didn't grow; I became aware of having to work to pay attention.

NOW EXTENDED! THROUGH MAY 6 ONLY

"ASTONISHING & DARING,
and as tightly constructed as a finger-trap toy.
AN EXTRAORDINARILY USEFUL & EXCRUCIATING SATIRE —
OF THE LEFT, BY THE LEFT, FOR THE LEFT — FOR TODAY!"

Jesse Green, *The New York Times*



Adam Feldman, *Time Out*

