



311 Gets Dance Therapy



Published: July 7, 2008

At noon and 1:30 p.m. today uninitiated passersby might have been startled by the group of red and black-clad dancers jumping off the Municipal Building columns and silently strutting and sashaying in the outdoor lunch hangout at 1 Centre Street. Risa Jaroslow's "311" is a dance for Sitelines, part of the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council's series of site-specific performances — this one supposed to highlight city engagement.

It turned out to be equal parts modern dance and old-fashioned public forum. Alberto Dennis, the dancer-MC, brought out a microphone and started asking the crowd questions: "How do you feel about municipal government today?" "I don't really have an answer to that," a young woman says. Turns out she's from the Virgin Islands. Another man answers, "I probably shouldn't say, given that I work in it."

Dennis moves onto other questions: "What changes would you like to see in the city?" One man, votes for same-sex marriage rights. "Who knows what would

happen if there were more Republicans in the New York State Senate?” Another woman gave an impromptu PSA about giving up a subway seat to the elderly or pregnant. “That would be nice. And also — well, what about that 2nd Avenue train line? There’s been so many MTA fare hikes, but I’m not seeing a show of what I’m paying for.”

The crowd, like most in New York, got fairly vocal. The only group that refused to answer any questions was a cluster of young, blue-oxford’d Department of Education consultants — they were too busy trying to look busy over the remnants of Subway sandwiches and salads. Maybe they just didn’t have much to say.