

The Village Voice

New York

Tell Me About It

Joe Goode Performance Group at the Joyce

by

Deborah Jowitz

March 19 - 25, 2003

What a nice little girl she says she was! And what an understanding woman! But as Elizabeth Burritt sits at a table before a camera, sending to a screen a very large projection of her face, we notice that something is subtly askew. She coos empathy, but her face and body unleash hostility. Never trust a woman with a topknot.

Burritt—in a brilliant, over-the-top performance—is one of several contradiction-fraught characters in Joe Goode's *What the Body Knows*, shown during his San Francisco-based company's Joyce season. Goode's mordantly witty and poignant theater pieces fuse text and dancing, and this 2001 work appropriately pits mind against body, what people crave against what they will accept. Marit Brook-Kothlow, shedding blue powder from her wig, sings about how she wants Felipe Barrueto-

Cabello to touch her. But he's frozen, holding a box of cereal. Is it a dream when he dashes aside the Cheerios and grabs her into a tango? They end up sitting down glumly to eat breakfast.

Marc Morozumi twitches and scratches, frenzied, he tells us, with eczema. A party boy who needs sex often, he's allergic to staying home. His homebody lover (Vong Phrommala) surrounds their "room" with electric tea-kettles on long cords, whistling as they boil up domesticity. Morozumi wonders if he can change. Burritt's treacherous hostility binds these episodes together, along with Beth Custer's music and edgy dancing by all, including Jennifer Wright Cook.

Goode handles his themes obliquely. He's one of the few choreographer-authors who can grip and move you even when you're not sure what he's saying. The marvelous 1989 *Doris in a Dustbowl*, however, is lucid in its woebegone insanity. Pink net dress, white suit—oh,

yes, Doris Day and Rock Hudson. But no—hiccuping and gasping rhythmically, Goode and Burritt come to realize they're *not* movie stars in a '50s dreamland after all. He blows white dust on her; she drops an apronful on him. He brings in a little diorama, by James Morris, of a lonesome house on an arid plain. The big kiss never comes. Oklahoma, they admit, is not what they expected.

In *Take Place*, the dancers expand on Goode's monologue about the lack of stability among today's on-the-move people. What places do they remember? Where were or are they happiest? Goode might like a place in the country—not too far from conveniences, of course. At one point, prevaricating, he dons a Pinocchio nose. But the truth, he finally says, is in the land, in something not of our own making—something that reminds us how small we are.