

Cableman boogies at Stonington quarry

BY CRAIG IDLEBROOK — OCTOBER 1, 2006

What do you get when you combine a 26-foot high puppet, an excavator, pink-hatted dancers, a steel pan band and the Stonington Quarry?

You get Quarryography, a modern dance work-in-progress that wowed an audience of 450 Aug. 19.

The dance piece was a playful collaboration between five Blue Hill peninsula residents and the Stonington Opera House. Veteran choreographer Allison Chase said the idea was to bring elements of the Stonington Quarry to life and provide something more fantastical than a historical reenactment.

“It’s more of feeling of what happened in the quarry when no one was looking,” Chase said.

The dance revolved around Cableman, a 26-foot tall puppet made by Brooksville husband-and-wife puppeteers Mia Kanazawa and Mark Kindschi to resemble abandoned cables at the quarry. Cableman started the dance in a heap, then slowly unwound until he was running to the music by the end of the program. The puppet required a team of puppeteers and some very long poles.

Another non-traditional dancer in the piece was an excavator run by perhaps the world’s first “excavator artist,” Rick Weed. Chase said she always loves incorporating large equipment into her dances. This time, she chose the excavator for both its personality and its timeless quality.

“We sort of share a world with this huge equipment,” Chase said. “It also looks very dinosaur-esque.”

Rounding out the cast were real-live dancers from Maine and away, wearing hats to resemble pink granite and milkweed found at the quarry. The granite dancers goaded Cableman to life and one was even scooped up by the excavator.

Nine of the dancers were students from Southern Methodist University in Texas who paid for their own flights to Maine. The dancers braved slippery conditions at the Quarry, and two fell and were injured right before performance.

Music was provided by a steel pan band led by Nigel Chase, head of the Downeast Peninsula Pan movement (WWF Aug. 06). The band's festive calypso beat was enough to make any piece of cable come to life.

If you missed Cableman and his cohorts this summer, you'll get another chance to see them next year. Allison Chase said she plans to flesh Quarryography out into a bigger show for the coming summer. (How one can make a show that involves a giant puppet and an excavator any bigger is a question only Chase can answer.)

"I'd love to have more backhoes," Chase said.

Until then, Cableman has found a winter home in the rafters of Chase's garage, where he waits for the right calypso beat to come back to life.