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by [Wendi Winters](#) on [March 12, 2018](#)

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Doggone it! This is a fun show! (And, Arf-fully family-friendly). *Complete Dogness* is about a dog with bad habits, who has the ability to learn new tricks and win hearts. This was a one-time performance by the Jane Franklin Dance Company at The Athenaeum in Alexandria, an historic Greek Revival building constructed alongside the one remaining real cobblestone block in Old Town. A second performance is set for April 28 at Theatre on the Run in Arlington.



Kelly Hogan, Carrie Monger, Rebecca Weiss, and Brynna Shank in *Complete Dogness*. Photo by Jim Turner.

The show is performed by a quartet of unusual dancers: they are upbeat, effervescent, expressive, very physical and, yet, graceful. They destroy the archetype of stone-faced dancers performing *en pointe*.

On Sunday afternoon, director, producer, instructor, and mentor, Jane Franklin, personally greeted each person who attended this very intimate performance, set in the former bank's front room beneath a ceiling that soared more than 20 feet. Original artwork decorated the walls beyond the 12-foot tall wooden double doors. Inside, on the vintage yellow oak floors, were simple, white, tri-fold screens, a small wicker bench, and a low white table. The screens would perform multiple purposes as screens, columns, hideaways and a dog cage.

The cast, clad in current-day, casual, black and white outfits, included Kelly Hogan wearing a white blouse and short, swirly, black skirt, Carrie Monger (Mom) in a Courrèges-style sleeveless dress and black capri pants, Brynna Shank sporting a t-shirt, suspenders, and tropic-patterned shorts, and Kelsey Rohr (Barky the Dog) in black, cropped pants and a black-and-white striped top. They were all barefoot.

And, actually, there were four more cast members, though they did not know that before they entered the building. Four ticket holders – two men and two women – volunteered to join the cast in a scene. The regular cast was surprised the volunteers were all grownups. Usually, children in the audience beg to join the fun. These “characters” were given royal titles: Queen of She, Prince of Mr. Know-It-All, King of The Lost & Found, and Lady Who Busts to Front of Line.

Ms. Franklin was inspired to create this show by the Ogden Nash poem “The Dog.”

“ *The truth I do not stretch or shove
When I state that the dog is full of love.
I've also found, by actual test,
A wet dog is the lovingest.*”

This is an intriguing, can't-take-your-eyes-off-of-it show, especially since the performers are usually within three feet of your seat. The four women perform an energetic, muscular, almost gymnastic dance style, routinely lifting or supporting the spinning bodies of their cast mates. They seemingly have no fear as they dive for the floor and slide across it, or leap over one another. They also break another barrier: they speak. Or, in Barky's case, bark, whine and growl.

Kelsey Rohr as Barky is a doggone delight from her shaggy hair and immense, innocent, wide eyes to her canine delight at being scratched. Barky arrives in a box filled with piles of tissue paper. The doggie's antics nearly upend a social gathering, and Barky also manages to ruin a beloved sweater.

Will a stint in Doggie Obedience School cure Barky of her faux paws? Will she break hearts or make happy ones? Will the audience see more of these graceful goddesses as they smash the mold of dated dance styles while creating new, innovative forms of expression? Count on it.

Running Time: One hour with no intermission.

Complete Dogness had only one performance at The Athenaeum. However, a performance is scheduled for 7:30 p.m. April 28 at Theatre on the Run – 3700 S. Four Mile Run Drive, Arlington, VA. For tickets or call 703-933-1111, or buy them [online](#).

