

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Little Black Train

Sarah Elgart · Wednesday, November 20th, 2019

I'm almost positive I saw this screened years ago at Dance Camera West, but I recently once again came upon the 2015 film **Black Train is Coming** and was moved anew by the music, the movement, and the total straightforwardness, polish, and lack of pretense of its dancers, ENinja and Joyntz from Turf Feinz of Oakland. While there is no camera movement and the shots are mostly frontal – medium to wide and proscenium in nature – the rawness of the recording of this 1926 song by the Reverend J.M. Gates perfectly matches the gravelly animated quality of the film. I love the way it intertwines both the old and the new, e.g. the distressed look of the location with the coloring and treatment of the film via CG, and the comparative newness of the Flex and Turf dance forms with this old spiritual sermon, one of many by this reverend who was amongst “*the most prolific black preachers of the United States.*”

According to the liner notes, many of this Reverend's sermons “*were strong warnings of the hellish punishments that awaited sinners: ‘You better set your house in order, for that train might be here tonight.’*”

Hallelujah! This film is my kind of punishment.

Enjoy.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aWEJPQSP1e0>

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