

Tapping the City's Dance

# Choreo Works I

By PETER LEVITAN

Choreographers choreograph. They express themselves in a vocabulary of rhythm, gesture, time, movement, energy, space, phrase, and pulse. Occasionally they open their mouths and utter words. Which people (including the choreographer) have the good sense to pay little attention to. A recent gathering of dance critics, in fact, expressed strong feeling against choreographers being called upon (or even encouraged, or allowed) to verbalize their ideas by way of clarifying that which should be kinesthetically evident in their work.

"ChoreoConcerts & Critiques" is a Choreographers Theatre-New School program of all-premiere dances which violates this precept with welcome results. After four choreographers present their specially commissioned works, they get a chance to discuss their ideas behind them, or the work that went into them, and field questions from the audience.

Starting off the opening October 9 concert was Gus Solomons Jr. with his "Decimal Banana." First Gus emerges in a rich red top, tossing off chains of movements with delightful ease, sweeping legs, pivoting and rocking. His incredible legs, when lifted, seemed to float upward until they were outstretched miles from his body, and slip back down with the same quietness. His dancers followed in their earth colors—three men in lemon and orange, two women in lemon and brown—repeating his phrases or dwelling on certain elements. Most striking was Solomons' ability to achieve the same look of open effortlessness, of playfulness, on the other dancers' bodies.

Leaving the outdoor courtyard, the audience entered the auditorium where Phyllis Lamhut was already standing on stage, jiggling slightly in a mock-restlessness warm-up for "Moment." Her arm rose and her hand flipped out a gesture to one

(Continued on Page 12)

# Choreo Works & Words

(Continued from Page 8)

side, and the house darkened. Her other arm gestured to the other side, and John Cage cacophony started to pour out. She stopped staring at the audience and retreated to the wooden wall that blocked her retreat on the shallow stage. Her hands wandered busily but with an eerie moodiness, tapping and rubbing all over her body, as if testing to see that everything was in place with the expectation that something wasn't. Lamhut then unleashed a torrent of frenetic movement, sometimes mechanical, sometimes humorous: waving overhead, her victoriously clasped hands, drumming a tattoo with her fists on her thighs, punching her jaw in pantomime with an arm bouncing back and forth. At one point, I found her so swept up by the movement to be withdrawn from or to exclude the audience, which she'd ceased to relate to; only then did the piece lag. Eventually returning to her eerie body explorations, Lamhut melted back into the wall, and the work ended.

Joseph Tal's music concrete score "Min Hameitzar Karati Yah" (I Called Upon the Lord in Distress) drove maniacally onward a la Steve Reich, who lost himself in such a hypnotic drive of movement, leaving me in such a trance that I couldn't recall any of the physical dance, just the pounding growth of energy. Finally, breaking free of his bondage, he regains his (conscious) identity as he re-dons his black tights male-fashion; bright lights reveal him for a second, and he disappears in the sudden closing blackout.

Last was Beverly Brown in her duet "Body + Music" with Bill Kleinsmith. Complex rhythms pulsed out of Fred Simpson's conga drum, drawing Brown and Kleinsmith out on stage. Their "Illustrated Man" costumes by Philip Hipwell were white tank tops and tights, blazing with myriadic dizzyingly rich acrylic swirls. The dance, too, was rich with force: equally complex rhythms of driving dervish pulses that swept up the muscles and carried

*"Perhaps I was carried away, but I saw him stripping away his (male) identity as he stripped the black tights worn over his leotard, to dance the rest of the piece in white tights worn under his leotard, female fashion."*

... "East (To Nijinsky)" held me in that sort of rabid captivation that leaves me impatient to see a work again, immediately. Alan subsequently spoke of gaining his conception when seeing, en route to Israel (to stage an anti-war work for the Bat-Dor Company), a Jew accompanying his prayer on the airplane with the customary swaying. Seeing in this intense movement the body itself offering its prayer, Alan merged the theme of Nijinsky to evolve a religious piece laden with ontological overtones. First you barely see something in the near-total darkness: skin. A curve. An arm. It hovers on the brink of disappearance, but grows into Alan cowering on the floor, who then disappears. And slowly reappears. It remains difficult to see him on the floor, over all the heads, in the dimness, as he slips in and out of contact through the impenetrable shadows. Perhaps I was carried away, but I saw Alan stripping away his (male) identity as he stripped the black tights worn over his leotard, to dance the rest of the piece in white tights worn under his leotard, female fashion. The black tights pulled over his head gave him the silhouette of a woman with long hair draping his shoulders. As

the bodies. At one point, Brown and Kleinsmith flowed from one movement at stage rear right into a tour that carried them forward; one then felt that their bounding could have defied gravity or space, had they wished to merge more with the drumming and to soar off across the auditorium.

The post-concert commentary was revealing, but marginal. Whether one starts with the elements and patterns of a base ten system (as Solomons elaborated) or complex rhythmic units of seven, eleven and thirteen (Brown), or simply with an emotional concept (Lamhut) or "inner motor" (Lamhut), focus must remain on the finished dance, theories notwithstanding.

ChoreoConcerts & Critiques continues at The New School with Robert Dunn, Douglas Dunn, Carolyn Lord and Sara Shelton (Oct. 16); Raymond Johnson, Cliff Keuter, Elina Mooney and Janet Spares (Oct. 23); and Sally Bowden, Richard Bull, Laura Foreman and Stuart Hodes (Oct. 30).

Other imminent dance events include the National Folklore Ballet of Ecuador at Hunter College and the acclaimed Indian dancer, Balasaraswati, at Town Hall (both tonight). Also, the Elgin Cinema (8 Ave. at 19th St.) continues its Sunday morning dance films with "Plisetskaya Dances" and "Galina Ulanova" (Oct. 14), Nureyev and Fonteyn in "Romeo and Juliet" (Oct. 21), and Plisetskaya and Fadeychev in "Swan Lake" (Oct. 28).

### Hotel Alexandria

250 W. 103 St.

one & 2 room apartments  
with private bath

reasonable price

Special rate for students

## Revved motors, ritualized prayer

Like lecture-demonstrations, the Choreoconcerts and Critiques programs at the New School provide a convenient way of finding out how a choreographer approaches his work and what he thinks about a particular piece, even though ultimately it isn't important how he does it or what he thinks he's created. The dance always speaks for itself, with varying degrees of eloquence, and there may be considerably more or less to the dance than the choreographer believes. Still, it's nice to know.

Manuel Alum explained in the post-performance discussions that "East—To Nijinsky" was inspired by the devotions of an elderly and pious Jew aboard a jet bound for Israel, as well as by Nijinsky's diary. The piece is in a loose ABCBA form in which A represents Alum the individual and B a transition between his own identity and the center section, achieved through tumbles and thrashing crawls across the stage, his arms sometimes raised in supplication or evocation. In the center section, he lights a candle and removes his tights to use them as filin, a kind of prayer shawl. He stares at the flame, trance-like, shivering and rocking slightly back and forth (evoking Hebrew prayer), while Joseph Tal's score squeaks electronically and shouts and sings distortedly in Hebrew "I call upon the Lord in distress." (The singing reminds me of muazzin calling Moslems to prayer.) The shivers build into tremors and erupt into body spasms. Alum falls to his knees and bows several times (evoking Moslem prayer) before extending a balletic arm and leg (evoking

Nijinsky?) and then falling on the candle, extinguishing it. This entire section could also be a metaphor for the intensifying obsession with which Nijinsky sought his God. It is clearly a dance of peace, the unexpected irony was revealed only days before the premiere in the newspaper headlines: there was renewed war in the Holy Land.

Phyllis Lamhut was the most vocal choreographer during the discussions (while Alum was the most reticent). She explained how "Moment," a chattering solo of isolated body movements performed to a cluttered cacophony composed by John Cage, was developed from improvisations. The performance wasn't quite the

same as in rehearsals because she found that once she got her "motor running" she became kinetically hysterical and just let the movement do what it wanted. Maybe I should say movements—sometimes it looked as if every joint in her body had its own little independent motor which was continually threatening to veer out of control. When the energy became too much even for her, Lamhut "took it out into space," scurrying in a big circle before resuming her center-stage freneticism. Some motifs were recognizable: the dribbling of a basketball, prize fighting, and an odd combination of genuflecting and searching for fleas. Or maybe the last motif was Lamhut

Beverly Brown's "Body Music" was crystallized after weeks of rehearsals in which she experimented with ways of moving to the live accompaniment of Fred Simpson's Afro-Caribbean drums. Brown and Klein-Smith avoid the kind of emphatic accents one most often sees when such music is used. Instead, Brown fills a floating, effortless impulse to the beat, emphasizing spatial flow rather than percussive response. Brown, who is a member of the Erick Hawkins Company, reflects Hawkins' preoccupation with form, symmetry, and balanced movement (a lean to the left is frequently compensated, or cancelled out, by a lean to the right, etc.).

Gas Solomons, Jr., explained that "Decimal Banana" was created as an exercise in changing relationships for the lack of relationships between the six dancers. I'm willing to take

in the New School courtyard (the other pieces on the program were performed in the auditorium) running in place, hopping, and jumping. I saw legs repeatedly probing space (which might have been the basic phrase which he spoke about during the discussions), unison movement spreading from dancer to dancer, and the like. But I couldn't see all of the dance because of other on-lookers standing in front of me. I could have been boorish and jockeyed for position, but that wouldn't have solved the problems for others in the same situation. That's why I am filled with trepidation by outdoor events. Too often no one considers the sightlines. I suppose I'm more tolerant if the location is integral to the piece, or if the choreographer doesn't want anyone to see all of the dance. But what's the sense of working up an almost mathematically structured work of changing relationships if not everyone in the audience can see the dance well enough to perceive the choreographer's intention?

—Robert J. Pierce

## Peruvian Painting

"Peruvian Paintings by Unknown Artists: 800 B.C. to 1700 A.D." the first attempt to bring together pre-Conquest paintings of Peru in an exhibition, will be on view through November 11 at the Center for Inter-American Relations, 650 Park Avenue (at 68th Street).

These rare paintings are an almost unknown pre-Columbian art form. Because of their scarcity and condition, which is often fragmentary and delicate, with a risk of damage in shipping or display, they have received little attention.

The center's exhibition is drawn largely from the collection of Reynaldo Lutz of Lima, and other collections in this country. The paintings fall generally into three main categories: mythical imaginings—deities of creatures of mys-

tical import or connections; false heads for memory bundles; and decorative figures of men, birds, animals, fish, or geometric designs repeated in patterns created more laboriously during weaving. All of the works were executed with dyes in pre-Spanish techniques.

Some of the oldest Peruvian paintings ever discovered will be included in this showing. These are from the "Early Horizon" period, marked by the diffusion of the Chavin culture within Peru. Dates indicated by radio-carbon measurements put it somewhere from the 1000 B.C. to 500 B.C.

One of the strangest of all Peruvian paintings in the collection comes from the Chimu area. Unfortunately it was cut into 15 or more sections after its discovery, but, while all of the pieces have not been found, the original length can be calculated at a minimum of 165 feet. The base fabric has been woven

wise so that the average height was about 70 inches. The artist planned 20 square units bounded by borders consisting of a succession of repeated figures—a procession of male prisoners along the top, ends, and vertical separations, and a procession of women prisoners along the bottom—over 900 in all. The squared central areas of the panels have one to three large male prisoners each and are filled in with many smaller figures. Two fragments of another work from the same tomb, showing various sea birds, fish, and other forms of marine life, have also been obtained for the exhibit.

The gallery is open from noon to 6 p.m. every day. Admission is free.

## City Paintings

A special exhibition on "The Vanished City," paintings of New York from 1930 to 1970 by Cecil G.

# Utah Repertory Dance Theatre

"A company which all America should see"—Walter Terry

PROGRAM C (incl. Tally Fraimess)  
OCT. 18 & 20 AT 8

PROGRAM A  
OCT. 19 at 8

Tickets: \$8.50, 4.50, 2.50. Students & Senior Citizens 1/2 price at Hunter Arts Concert Bureau, 695 Park Avenue or TheatreBox, Tel. 632-6100