

# Spill

Feb. 1978

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DANCE  
REVIEWS  
NEWS  
ARTICLES  
PHOTOS



photo: B. Besold

## DANCE AXE GRINDING

**DANCE LIVES! an interview  
with Victor Coleman & Paula Ravitz of A Space**

**Elizabeth Chitty**

**E:** There's been a big push in dance in the parallel galleries—and particularly at A Space, I think probably more than any other parallel gallery—in the last year or so. In the context of the parallel galleries, not just generally the “dance boom”, I wonder if you have any ideas on what you would attribute this to... One obvious thing would be that because parallel galleries do have a multidisciplinary thrust that makes them an obvious environment for dancers to get involved in.

**V:** Yes, I don't know about the trend. It's probably irrelevant to think of it in terms of trends because—I just saw some dance for the first time and thought it would be interesting in the space and it turned out that it was.

**P:** In terms of dancers plugging into the space—it's an open forum.

**V:** There's no dance axe to grind at A Space—not yet anyway. There's no real vision behind the programming I don't think. It's just the stuff that has presented itself. We've always put a very limited controlling element on it, it's been very museum-like or gallery-like more than it's curatorial.

**E:** So really the reason that it's here is just because it's there and it wasn't at A

Space before because it didn't present itself to you.

**V:** Yes. Although I've only been here for three years. The reason it didn't happen before that was because there was no interest in terms of A Space administration in dance. Where as I have an innate interest in dance because I'm a poet who uses dance in his poetry and uses the precepts of dance and always have, but never understood it. Now I'm beginning to understand it. So I'm using it as a personal forum in some ways. But it's not something I'm trying to set up as “this is a picture of dance”—

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*& there's more!*

## SCANNING THE FLAT HORIZON

The National Ballet of Canada  
O'Keefe Centre  
Feb. 8-March 11

**J. Groo Bannerman**

That the National Ballet of Canada finished its spring season Saturday, March 11th, with *Romeo and Juliet* was singularly appropriate. A series of deaths, some unnoticed until they're pointed out, some lingering and pointless, some quick and self-inflicted, is an excellent metaphor for what the National presented. The season was almost unmercifully dull. Not only were four out of the five weeks devoted to the classics, but the energy and vitality of the company was at a low ebb, as well. One night was given over to a fund-raising Gala that featured Suzanne Farrell and Peter Martins from the New York City Ballet and Elisabetta Terabust from the Festival Ballet. Peter Schaufuss, who recently joined the National as a principal, from

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Karen Kain & Frank Augustyn

EDITORIAL

Elizabeth Chitty

Allow me to draw your attention to an excerpt from "The Value of Parallel Galleries", by Glenn Lewis, in the February issue of *Parallelogramme*, on the last page:

7. More self-examination in the Parallel Galleries and ANNPAC should be carried out to research the questions that are brought up in this report as well as other questions: Are all Parallel Galleries meeting the criteria? Artist-run? Experimental? or should the criteria be changed? Would an advisory board be useful? How to reduce internal competition? How to raise private funds more effectively? In other words, more questions should be asked of ourselves. Questions and suggestions directed at funding agencies are a necessary part of our present cultural and political process, but our questioning should not always be directed towards funding agencies. We must decide the direction and the priorities for ANNPAC to insure the future health of the contemporary arts and the organization. There are conservative forces at work who will try to make decisions for us if we don't stand up and make them for ourselves.

Transition. Experimental art activities and their centres have matured to a point where priorities and directives must be re-emphasized or changed. Profile is no longer as closet as it once was and yet does not have the finite definition of public. The self-examination of changed status is necessary not only because it creates possible drastic change in the attitude of the life-line government funding agencies but because of what it indicates in terms of a changing relationship in the overall cultural/social/political context.

Surely this transition can provide a point of departure into a situation which continues and employs the procedures of the recent past, which takes those priorities and develops them for the present situation rather than negating them. The alternate circuit was built on the rejection of certain establishment values. Development from that rejection does not have to lead only back to affirmation of those values. Now that alternate galleries have gained power, exposure and the accompanying budgets and administrative loads, there will undoubtedly be conservative pressure to "grow up" into establishment frameworks. In order to resist that pressure, artists and artist-run centres will have to be able to control their own maturation with an awareness of how their past priorities relate to how we've grown.

Right now there's an awful lot to gain and quite a bit to lose. Deciding which is which is the hard part.



"Now that I'm an artist no one will ever call me just a housewife' again!"

submitted by Lynn Rotin

LETTERS

As a feminist and an English Teacher, I must voice some strenuous objections to both the form and content of your recent article, "Sex Thing" (ed. "Sex Think") printed in *Spill*.

First, I wish to attack the nonchalance with which most of your contributors cast grammatical conventions to the winds. If they do it for the sake of honesty of expression, at least they could express themselves more clearly and concisely. For example, what advantage is gained by tormenting the reader with pathologically detailed (and often inaccurate) recountings of every single action executed in a dance piece (à la Jonathan Bannerman)? Ignoring his sexual obsessions (which Brenda Neilson has successfully castigated), we are confronted by a "critic" whose mile-long sentences and fatuous lacunae defeat any hope of comprehension.

Your other reviewers seem to strive either for theoretical obscurity (John Oswald, Brenda Neilson); stones, quasi-lecherous emissions (Paul Wong); or anonymous, nonsense overheard and recorded in the lobby after a performance. "I was glad I came it was good" or "UMMM I really like the concept"—such comments reveal nothing but the audiences' criminal inarticulateness. I hate reading raw conversation—every "really", "ummm", "kind of" and "like" make my eyes smart. Is this just a personal quirk, or do other literate readers feel the same? I think the idea of seeking immediate reactions to a work is a valuable mode of criticism (as evidenced by Mimi Beck's review), but is it too much to expect a little editing of the data? No one is being quoted directly, so what difference does it make if casual utterances are not printed verbatim?

If I seem to have waxed ferocious thus

far over trivial matters, the bulk of my wrath must be reserved for you as the editor who permitted such articles to be printed and as the author of the logical and lexical abomination entitled "Sex Thing". Here the conversational style of writing has plunged to its lowest depths. The concept of dance as a purely sexual exhibition is one that I find abhorrent. I'm certainly not "anti-sex", but if erotic degradation and sado-masochism are the only aesthetics that you can offer your audience, I must respond, "No thank-you". I agree that strippers are honestly expressing "the oppressed sex object role", but why not leave that function to them rather than attempting to parody what is already pathetically obvious?

Grammatically, this article is horrifying. Anyone who could conceive a sentence like "I know there was a time when I shunned provocative dress to not risk placing myself in that role but eventually realized that red garter belts weren't just for someone else to get their rocks off but for my own rocks thanks" deserves to be publicly horsewhipped (or perhaps such a performance would appeal to your "M" proclivities?) And about this interminable "tit Affair"—I'm pleased to know that you possess and enjoy tits, but who cares? It's totally degrading for a serious performer to be described in the manner. It's similar to mentioning Yehudi Menuhin's cock in a review of a Violin Concerto. I hope Carolyn Shaffer's brilliant rebuttal at Dance Works V will put an end to this pointless cat fight.

I don't intend to offend you by these remarks. I respect your desire to write as you speak, but PLEASE take the marbles out of your mouth (mind) before committing anything else to paper. *Spill* has published engaging and well-written articles in the past, and I hope that you will find some new reviewers, or else drive your current herd into a remedial language program.

Anne Langdon

DANCE WORKS SEVEN

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NYCB, partnered Terabust in the best performance he gave all season, the pas de deux from *Don Quixote*. The National chose this occasion to premiere their latest acquisition from the Royal Ballet, Sir Frederick Ashton's *The Dream*.

I'm not a fanatical admirer of Ashton's choreography; at his best it can be prissy and pretentious, at his worst it surpasses Chinese water torture. *The Dream*, Ashton's interpretation of Shakespeare's play, has moments of pure clarity. For instance, the inhuman movement of the fairies is believable, unlike most other Fairyland ballets. An expressive solo for Titania, subtly interwoven with the dancing of the corps and the four major fairies of her court, and a wildly exuberant pas de cinq for Puck and the four were memorable. Ashton saw the ballet as an expression of Romanticism and choreographed it in the Romantic style. The use of stagelines is effective throughout the ballet, from the swirling spirals of the flitting, feet-flying fairies to their posed V pointing upstage to



Sergiu Stefanski, Veronica Tennant and Victoria Bertram in *Romeo and Juliet*

Titania's nest, from the squared criss-crossing on the diagonals in the quarrel of the four human lovers to Titania's armthrashing cross of the front of the stage while Oberon bounds down one side in their pas de deux of reconciliation. However, the effective stagelines sometimes seem affected, in particular Bottom's solo after he is returned to human form, in which he points, paws the earth, and runs back and forth across the stage. It's difficult to imagine how a flow of movement could be made more predictable than by having the dancer point out his intended direction of travel.

The ballet comes across as fuzzy and confused, properly dream-like but also delusive, because of the vagueness of the National's performance. It's notoriously difficult to present a ballet from only a Benesh score, as *The Dream* was placed on the National, and the intricate details of feeling and artistic direction which only the choreographer himself can bring to a production make a colossal difference in any ballet. The corps, in particular, seem overwhelmed by the swiftness of their steps and vague about their intended purpose and

deportment. Since their entrance begins the ballet and thus establishes its mood, this creates a confusion throughout.

The fairies aren't just ethereal creatures of the air, they're also inhuman. They don't think like humans, they don't feel like humans, and they don't move like humans. They should fill the stage, seemingly everywhere at once, and their steps must be effortlessly invisible. When pairs circle to meet and freeze in front and then dart away again, the freeze of movement should snap into existence out of nothingness, and vanish before one sees it's gone. The sudden stop and start isn't the adopted pose of a dancer, but a flitting green shadow that instantly appears as a fairy before one's astonished eyes and then disappears into shadow again. The wave of ascending and descending movement that runs like a theme through the ballet is set in this scene. It must seem unnatural by appearing to be effortless.

The leading and assisting roles didn't fare much better than the corps and were often worse. Exceptions were David Roxander's Puck, somehow brittle and mercurial at once, and David Gornik's Bottom, with precise and eloquent footwork as the prancing Bottom-turned-ass, and realistic and subtle acting in human form. Colleen Cool, as Helena, and Sergiu Stefanski, as Lysander, were both priceless. Veronica Tennant's Titania made her appear as a jaded neurotic grown negativistic with ennui and too many Martinis, instead of a passionate, tempestuous Queen. James Kudelka, as Oberon, was simply absurd. He could barely keep up to even Tennant's Titania, let alone tame her. His partnering was so clumsy that the sole excitement in his catches and lifts of Tennant was in wondering if he would drop her. A rather fitting indication of his inadequacy was his cape-size, which was half the length of the other Oberon's, Luc Amyôt, to his waist instead of to the floor.

Luc Amyôt (Am-yo) managed Oberon better, his pure line and strength making up where his youthful inexperience as a principal couldn't carry him through. His portrayal of the role is still a non-entity in comparison to what it could be, however, appearing to dominate by elephantine bombast rather than imperialistic grandeur. Oberon is a figure of power almost beyond human comprehension. His every gesture should shout magnificence, not magniloquence. Karen Kain gave a glimpse of what *The Dream* could become if properly done. Her Titania was luminous and the wild waving of Titania's arms gave Kain a perfect outlet for the frequent eccentricity of her porte de bras and upper back.

The National presented another Ashton ballet during the season, his eighteen-year-old rehashing of the ancient and decrepit *La Fille Mal Gardée*. Ashton's *Fille* is a ballet so bad

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that the mind totters on the brink of insanity in trying to imagine an original *Fille* that was somehow worse.

The ballet tells the story of Widow Simone, a rich farmer, who is arranged to have her daughter, Lise, married to Alain, the village idiot, who is also the son of Thomas, a vineyard landbaron. Widow Simone is, at the same time, attempting to keep Lise and a young farmer, Colas, who love each other, from meeting and spoiling her marriage arrangements. She fails. It's a situation comedy.

If *La Fille Mal Gardée* is taken on its own terms; i.e., as light entertainment, carefree fun, fresh, delightful, charming, witty, pastoral, honest, simple, true to life, down to earth, about real people, etc., then it's a very good ballet. As light entertainment, it's exceptionally and unquestionably well done. The composition is as tight as a Zurich bank account, the choreography is blissfully succinct and wonderfully inventive, each scene is stuffed with bulging with subtle details of wit, much of the dancing is beautifully simple and



Karen Kain and Frank Augustyn in *Collective Symphony*

simply beautiful, and the story sincerely is about real people.

Yet I cannot be rational and objective about this ballet. I loathe. My viewpoint is completely subjective. To me, "if *Fille* is taken on its own terms," translates into, "if you can stomach it," "light entertainment," into, "commercial trash," and the list of adjectives and adjectival phrases into a string of obscenities. It's not so much the thousand and one examples of camp, kitsch, and nostalgia in the ballet, the opening scene of five dancers in giant chicken suits, Colas tying the yellow ribbon Lise has left for him around the handle of his rake and joyously proffering it to the audience, Alain's hat, with the ridiculous flower sticking out of it, his horseback ride of his red umbrella between his legs, and so on, and so on. Although I consider nostalgia, camp, and kitsch to be historical perspective and artistic appreciation for the shallow mind, these things are bearable, witty in their own right, and can be appreciated in a shallow way. Nor am I that deeply concerned by respectable artists being forced to undergo the embarrassment

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and humiliation of performing such nauseating bilge in order to be in a company, earn a salary, and be given the opportunity to perform. It must be like an oven inside those chicken suits but, after all, it's their choice to be there. They could always refuse the part and accept the probable consequences of never being given a part outside the corps again.

My abhorrence towards *La Fille Mal Gardée* is based on a matter of ethics and simple decency. As a society, we have hopefully passed the point when the mocking, tormenting, and misunderstanding of a retarded human can be used (as Alain is used) as an object of amusement and bathos in a work of art and remain acceptable. To me, *La Fille Mal Gardée* is not funny. It is sick.

An excellent example of the difference between what Nadia Potts and what Vanessa Harwood can bring to a production occurred during the week. At one point in the ballet, Colas is apologising to Lise and she bourrées past him three times as he grasps her trailing arm and kisses his way up it to her neck. When Potts does this sequence, her following arm seems to trail behind her as if by accident and the first time Colas grasps it the audience doesn't laugh. They laugh the second time, and the third time they laugh louder, because what they are seeing are three different movement meanings. When Harwood does it, her arm whips up into position for Colas to take the first time and the audience laughs. They don't laugh the second and third time, because they've already seen all there is to see.

Thankfully, the National presented *Swan Lake* the next week. I thought I would need a week of *Swan Lake* to wash the film of *Fille* off my eyes but the opening night performance by Kain and Augustyn created a whole new time and space to see in. Kain danced with precision, aplomb, and élan, the distinctions between her lyrical and idealized Odette and her sexy and deceitful Odile finely detailed and subtly drawn out. Her phrasing and dynamics, beautiful in and of themselves, were also used as an eloquent expression of her characters and moods. Kain still shows a tendency to slur her steps, however, particularly in Odile's solo, as an aid to those phrasings and dynamics. Great ballerinas don't have to slur their steps to emphasize their phrasing.

Augustyn is becoming a reliable joy to watch. His partnering is impeccable. When he's partnered with Kain, and when they're both floating on top of the music, the spotlight seems to be shining out of them. He's also developing a penchant for pensive solos. He had several of them this season, (one in *Sleeping Beauty*, several in *Four Schumann Pieces*, presented during the Gala, and one in *Swan Lake*) and danced them as if they came from the heart. *Four Schumann Pieces* showed

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## BARBARA DILLEY WORKSHOP

Below is the course description for a workshop given by Barbara Dilley at A Space, January 16-18. It was co-sponsored by 15 Dance Lab and A Space.

All dancing involves the training of body and mind, inner and outer, to meet without hesitation in the moment of doing the dance, whether it is classical, choreographed or spontaneous. During these 3 days various disciplines will be presented and explored which can expand awareness, strengthen confidence and present the possibility of direct un-cluttered decisions for both experienced dancers and beginners. What is required is curiosity, commitment to do the work, and concentration.

### The First Day

Presenting the basic force of gravity acting on the basic architecture of the body, the bones, we will check out alignment issues and explore them in the simple yet complete dance of walking—proper balance of body weights while in motion, rhythmic play, length of stride, turning, stillness and choice of movements because of what is seen from the "corners of the eye". Then we will concentrate on

peripheral gestures through working out on *corridors*, a form that suggests dancing together as well as "holding your own", in a playful yet formal manner.

### The Second Day

Beginning with the walking pattern, we will look at the process of *personal warmup* and suggest greater attention to what is actually going on, today, with the body and how to create a private discipline. Reviewing *corridors*, more variation will be presented and how relationships are begun, not only to "other" but also to space. Greater focus will be placed on form and arrangement in space. Finally, the *Grid* will be presented.

### The Third Day

Personal warmup and the walking form will begin the class. A review of *corridors* and then focusing in on the *grid* and how to expand the seeing to include an overview. This begins to change one's movement choices and to expose how and why these choices are made. The last exercise is to create an arena of a *square* of red yarn and with simple patterns of the obvious, suggest and create a visual theater, both intimate, disciplined and spontaneous.



Irene Grainger during the Barbara Dilley workshop

photo: B. Besold

## J.M.P.—HOMILY POSSUM

Sometimes I feel uneasy when I think of dancers approaching the business of creating "art performance" pieces. I have more often been stimulated and excited by art performances conducted by visual artists. Dancers moving beyond the realm of pure dance are frequently plagued by the "I must dance" syndrome. This syndrome usually results in the fogging of what was possibly an idea with clarity. I always suspect cerebrally oriented art performers (dancers or not) have a strong urge to simply verbalize their ideas as lucidly as they can. It's understandable because the business of bringing to performance in movement the same clarity with which the mind conceptualizes is hard—very hard. The cerebrally oriented dancer approaching art performance has to deal with both the urge to simply "say it" and the "I must dance" syndrome.

Jennifer Mascall's *Homily Possum* seemed to be constructed around the do it (dance it)—say it dichotomy. The two outer T.V. sets (of 3 in a row) with pre-recorded tapes of J.M. exemplified the split. (TV 1—J.M. saying it, TV 3—J.M. doing it) while the middle set with J.M. performing (JMP) live was the synthesis. Performance of one's own work is, by its very nature, a synthesis, in one's own peculiar proportions of the "do it—say it" urges. In a way it's the old heart-head dichotomy that has plagued art, and just about everything else since Plato and Aristotle failed to get it together centuries ago.

The "should I do it" or "should I say it" problem provided for me a way of looking at the whole performance. It was variously examined and commented on with some of the possible word movement combinations pushed pointedly to the absurd, as was the case with movement descriptions in terms of muscular contractions—backwards and inside out too!

JMP seemed to feel that just "saying it" caged an idea; at least such was what I gathered from the small boxes drawn

while JMP was in conversations with her pre-recorded self on TV 1. The writing down of movements falls, I think, into the "say it" side of the dichotomy. Small symbols derived from audience members were placed in boxes and somehow used as a movement basis. I got the impression that a heavy emphasis on writing or saying ideas was for J.M.P. unsatisfactory but, too the whole tenor of the piece suggested a "just doin' it" approach wasn't acceptable either.

To me the final section of the performance concerning Delius' operatic version of *Romeo and Juliet* offered an overview to the "do it—say it" dichotomy. True to the theme the story was verbally told, told in movement and the two were combined. But it wasn't so much anything to do with those aspects as it was the very story itself which intrigued me. In the context of the performance it seemed to say that if the limbo between the "do it" desire and the "say it" urge is plowed up, as was the neutral strip between the two farmers' land, the magic (in the story, the love of *Romeo and Juliet*) they can potentially create through respectful cohabitation will be destroyed. It seemed to me a well manipulated metaphor advocating some sort of balance—certainly one viable way of dealing with the problem.

Though the performance was only an hour long I personally felt supersaturated and a lot just went in one eyeball and out the other. I've always felt that doing and including too much was easy but clarifying and simplifying without blatancy was difficult. Though I can't pin down a specific I had a general sense that the performance was more clearly conceptualized in J.M.'s mind than it came across. Also after talking with a friend about the performance for a while I had the sense that some of what I had seen was what I call "puzzle art". It's not an invalid form, I'm just not its biggest fan. The basic rule of puzzle-art is take an idea

and sink it deep in abstract clues.

Some things did stick in my mind though and the fact that I still retain them now, 3 weeks later without notes, attests to the impression they made on me.

One was the statement that "Dance is now where science was in 1900." (The year incidentally when the opera *Romeo and Juliet—a Village* was written.) Science around that time was very confident, secure and in retrospect, very naive. 1900 was pre-relativity, pre-quantum theory, pre-contingency physics, pre major genetics discoveries—in short pre-modern as we know it, science. Perhaps modern dance as we know it is really just very pre-modern dance as we will come to know it.

The other thing which struck me substantially was the image of J.M. sitting staring through a magnifying glass. One hand held the glass while the other was between the glass and her eyes. The only thing preventing one from seeing more clearly is oneself.

Though I have been partly critical of *Homily Possum* I did like it and even more it allayed a bit my "sometimes worry" about dancers approaching art performance. Give us more J.M.

## NEW DIRECTIONS IN MIME a workshop of a different sort Bibi Caspari

Mime, to me, is the midrange on a spectrum between dance and theatre, and can validly extend in both directions. Because of this outlook, I have found it important in my work to study a variety of techniques, including ballet, acrobatics, acting and voice, as well as mime. My work reflects this attitude, ranging from material that is very dancelike (using more abstract movement, etc.) to pieces that are very theatrical (using costumes, props, voice, etc.). These explorations take mime out of the basic French mime tradition into different realms.

As part of these investigations, I have become intrigued with the idea of an interdisciplinary workshop which would focus on the creation of material. The hope is to find people with established skills in mime, dance, or acting, who have vivid, working imaginations. I am interested in being a director and catalyst to a group of such people, who would work together on specific themes, exploring the creation of material in a troupe environment. My feeling is that the type of skills of the individual (i.e. mime, dance, or acting) is not as important as the quality of the technique and imagination of the individual.

I will be running such a workshop April 3-27, Mon.-Thurs., from 7-10 p.m. The fee for the session is \$40. For information and auditions, call (416)535-4193.

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this is just some dance that happens in Toronto.

E: For sure there is a difference in the interest level in dance at A Space over the past period of time. I can personally remember that the first time I performed here (1975) it wasn't as easy to perform as it has been lately.

V: Well, a lot of ground needed to be broken to do that. I think that if you try to think of it in terms of trends that the trend should come from dance not from A Space. It's not A Space that's setting the trend, A Space is providing the forum for the trend and probably the best aspects of the trend. And it's giving it a certain kind of audience. I think A Space can be proud about keeping the thing going. We got there pretty much when it started to happen. As far as A Space goes, there was just never any interest before, there was never any interest in a broad range of performance here. It was a pretty narrow kind of thing that was going on with just a few people but now it's a much broader public. I think it's useless to break it up into disciplinary concerns. That's the nice thing about the dance audience here is it's not your typical dance audience.

E: Paula, did you think it was the regular dance audience or was it a broader audience which reflects A Space?

P: It was broader. A lot of the regular dance audience came also and they were new to A Space.

E: So there was some cross-fertilization there.

P: Definitely.

E: Well, the other question I wanted to ask is specifically dance-axe-grinding. I've always thought of parallel galleries as having a specialized interest or specific focus, that being new and innovative forms of whatever kind of art was being presented and I very much felt in "Dance Lives!" that that was not the case and I wondered why. I assumed that it probably wasn't a conscious thing—

V: A Space is no longer classifiable as a parallel gallery I don't think.

E: Why?

V: It's too broad a spectrum now, it's not just a series of special events, it's something else that's developed—

P: Well, I think basically it has to do with the people who performed their work. I asked a lot of people to show their work and half said no and half said okay and a few people I even had to talk into it because there weren't enough people to fill up the weeks that we had. I was interested in getting a range of performers.

E: So you approached it from that angle then, getting a broad range of different kinds of dance.

P: I've seen a lot of different dancers because the dance scene in Toronto is so much. And I asked almost everybody who I'd seen perform basically, except for big companies. There was no criteria for choosing, I asked every single person I could think of.

E: So you were interested in presenting something with a broad range that didn't have a specific focus. Although I recognize it as naivety—talking personally now from what I'm interested in—I usually connected A Space with an environment that had a specific interest in new things, so I felt disappointed with "Dance Lives!" because it wasn't presenting that point of view which is important to me. I wondered if dance was being treated differently than other art forms because I didn't think that A Space would present visual arts or music that was as traditional as the dance that was presented here in "Dance Lives!" I wondered if that was because dance is new to this context so therefore it hadn't reached a point where you had, as you said, a specific dance axe to grind, whether it was just because of ignorance, or if it were a conscious thing. What you've said seems to indicate that it was in one way conscious because you wanted to present a broad range of things.

P: I wanted to present a broad range of things but I didn't select—I asked everyone. So in a way I didn't have plans in programming.

E: Well, it is a plan in a sense. It's the same as "Dance Artists Soho" which I organized, to ask everybody and present, again, the whole spectrum pretty well.

V: So you would expect A Space, as the premier parallel gallery, to provide some sort of direction maybe?

E: Well, I have always seen a direction—rightly or wrongly, and of course it's impossible to make things entirely tenacious to one direction—but generally they are seen as having the specific direction towards new things. For instance that's why I turned to A Space in the first place, in 1975, because I knew I couldn't find support for what I did in the established dance community, or at the time couldn't, so I wanted to turn to an environment which provided that support in other mediums anyway.

V: In terms of the program, didn't you think there were elements in the overall context, what looked like a cohesive program, that broke some new ground?

E: Yes, there were, but in terms of numbers I thought it was the minority.

V: So we have no pretensions.

E: You aren't providing any direction.

V: But we are providing such a broad audience that were're attracting the best dancers, I think.

P: I thought it was all good. I enjoyed all the concerts.

V: Once you see all the concerts, all four—I would definitely rate it on the scale from one to ten for sure. I see some performances as being real breakthrough especially in terms of the interdisciplinary aspect of dancers who understood the A Space aesthetic to put more performance, capital P performance into their work and less pure movement. Which is very akin to what's happening in poetry here. For some time, poetry here was poetry readings. People came and read their

poetry out of books. In the last two and a half years that hasn't been the case and the quality has varied because it's not very often that you get this new format happening so we're taking fairly green people into that ground. We're doing something really risky. I don't think that anybody in that dance series wasn't taking some kind of risk, I think some were more traditional than others, some were more academic than others. It had a lot of different aspects.

E: Do you have any response to what I said about the fact that I didn't think A Space would present work as traditional in other disciplines?

V: I get that dumped on me all the time. A lot of people will dump on us for the show (Vitaly Komar/Alexander Melamid. "Unofficial Art From the Soviet Union") for its traditional nature. A lot of people dumped on me for the sculpture show.

E: Probably the painting show last year—

V: Lynn Donahue.

E: What's your reaction to getting dumped on for that criteria?

V: Mostly it's just personal opinions. People coming to me and saying, "What is this, you know, why are you doing this kind of shit?" Thing is, I'm getting just as many people coming in and saying "This is great", so, I listen to both ends of that as much as I can.

E: Do you think that there was at one time a more unidirectional feeling at A Space?

V: Yes. There used to be a clique that ran the place. It was a glorified co-op. Their works were shown over and over again and they were able to use this huge space as a studio within which to produce and develop their art. So artists like Steven Cruise, Tom Sherman and Lisa Steele were able to really develop, but it was a very selfish development because they had this huge space. Whereas we have democratized it in the last two years.

E: In that democratization, the focus has changed from the more innovative, new, experimental forms?

V: Yes, I think it's silly for a place like A Space to have the pretensions that it can be ever aware of the new. I don't feel old myself, I just feel I've been developing something for a while and I might as well let the level go with the development. So now we have a broader audience which means that we have a broader program, it makes it somewhat more open.

E: I realize that it's sort of useless in a way to use A Space when talking about the whole context of parallel galleries, but I'm going to a bit anyway—do you think that that is likely to be a general trend in parallel galleries, that they will ultimately lead away from what as their original focus?

V: I think the really good ones will, they'll just keep developing and changing—moving from city to city, a real floating museum consciousness that's alive through the parallel gallery system. Nobody's really quite sure how

cont'd page 7

it's going to work. Everybody's holding on to their funding like crazy. Nobody really wants to take risks. But we can afford to take a lot of risks out front anyway because we are leading the field. I mean all the parallel galleries, I don't mean just A Space. We collectively see the things first before they become public. That's what we set ourselves up as. What you're saying is that we're not as exacting as you might want us to be.

E: Well, what I'm saying is that on the basis of my own opinions, what's most important to me is the new things—I've connected the new things with the environment of the parallel galleries and I've always seen that as their major focus and what I wanted them to work at, present, and open up to a broader public, whatever. That's just different from a policy which isn't as exacting, which is more democratic.

V: Where do you stand on companies these days?

E: With *Extreme Skin*, it was the first time that I ever thought it would be beneficial to my work for me to have a company. It would be the height of luxury if I could have twenty dancers who I could pay, who I could work with so I wouldn't have to meet with them for a few hours Saturday afternoons. And that sounds like a company. But if I were financially able to form something like that, it would be a dissolving company because the thing which I've always had against companies is that their administrative structure entails such entrenchment and such sapping from what people are really trying to accomplish which is their work.

V: Well in a sense, I think that's what we were trying to do with this series was to just leave it open. In many ways it was saying to the dance community, A Space is available for five weekends—first come first serve and a surprisingly small portion of the dance community actually responded.

P: I think it was a risk for anyone who responded.

E: How do you mean, a risk?

P: I certainly felt panicky about showing my work at A Space because I would consider my work more traditional. I work hard at it, and it's new to me at this point, what I do. But I felt panicky because I have preconceptions about the space, and I thought, oh it's not new enough. But I was pleasantly surprised. I felt panicky up to the day of the performance, and I thought people are not going to get off on this, I just don't know how people will respond to it. But it was fine and I was really pleased that it did feel okay and that it didn't matter what ideas I had about the space, that once we went in there we filled it with our energy and people responded to that.

E: The thing I find disconcerting, again totally from my fanaticism about newness, is how artists, say artists who work here, are involved in A Space, who in their own work have a commitment to innovation didn't seem to apply that point of view or discernment when they saw dance. I don't know if that's just

because so many people just haven't seen dance before—

V: Yes, I think we're dealing with a new audience.

E: It made me very depressed because I thought is it really the case that people can't see if something is new or very traditional without having knowledge of the whole historical context?

P: Well, inherent in dance is that it's not very accessible. I mean anyone can listen to old music, most people are familiar with the whole spectrum of music. But it's true, people just don't know—even many dancers don't know. Modern dance has only been on this planet for less than a hundred years—in terms of evolution, it's not very far a long the line, it'll be a while before people know.

E: It has the effect of making me feel like I'm in a really obscure corner sometimes. The fact that there is so much which is really old and which I differ with on those grounds that is just totally new to most of the audience. Oh, I wanted to ask you—in terms of the format A Space has taken this year, closing down the gallery—I thought that probably "Dance Lives!" would have been impossible in the regular format. Would it have happened do you think or is this a perfect example of what can happen in the present operation?

V: We don't have the staff to double up on our functions. If we had an interdisciplinary staff then we could have an interdisciplinary program but we can't do it all at once, it's just impossible.

E: Okay, well I think that pretty well covers my axe.

P: So Elizabeth, you object because—

V: I don't think Elizabeth is objecting, she's offering a critical point of view which is extremely valuable.

P: No, I understand.

E: See the thing is, I recognize the factism of my point of view. I usually feel that just as a person I'm always in two rackets—A. is general rah dance thing which makes me get involved in dance politically, in *Dance in Canada*

Joan Phillips (r.) in Brenda Nielson's "Collected Time", part of *Dance Lives!*

photo: John Oughton

say, which makes me believe in the editorial policy of *Spill*, which allows me to be on a jury for the Arts Council. So I've been furiously running around seeing lots of things which I just detest so much—I really hate so much modern dance it really upsets me to see it. So there's that very general thing. But then there's my own finite and personal point of view which is where I exist as an artist and as a person and from where I do my own work and of course the two are in complete conflict. I recognize that my negative reaction to "Dance Lives!" came from my own personal point of view—I had expectations of A Space, because of preconceptions of it, because of the identity it holds for me rightly or wrongly—like I said, I specifically turned to it for an outlet for myself when I didn't expect it from the dance community. I was disappointed because that very specific point of view which I hold and which I thought A Space held wasn't being held. But I recognize that ultimately you just can't operate that way—

V: Well I think that we still maintain what you want us to maintain but I don't think that this program was designed for that, this program was designed to be an open situation and in some ways to offer that option to some very traditional minded dancers. Some of them didn't pick it up. But I think if we start to focus on dance and do it a dancer at a time that we'll still be able to provide it. That's certainly what I'm looking for. I like it to be real fast and loose or else really tight.

E: I sometimes think that dance is in a different situation than the other arts—

V: Oh, it really is.

E: —because it is so new. It's a real bind because as I said sometimes I feel like I'm in an obscure corner, and when there's so little it almost seems ridiculous to put yourself in that corner.

V: Try doing a poetry reading two nights in a row—see if you can get more than 20 people to come out. You can't do it. So it's not the first time that comment's been used.

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## MUSEUM DANCE SHOWS DIFFERENT EXPLORATION

Iro Tembeck

Montreal's first experimental dance performance was sponsored by the Museum of Fine Arts on Saturday February 13th. Playing to a packed house (with not more than 2 or 3 representatives from the professional establishment in dance), 9 dancer choreographers and their groups shared their experience with the public.

The evening began with an informal demonstration of Contact Improvisation by Group Catpoto in the lobby. Working in close corps-a-corps shapes the rhythms seemed to be endless slow motion flows with underwater rubbery continuity and occasional outbursts of pattering feet and scramblings. Despite the fact that this a new form for Montreal dance, it is very close to the Sensitivity and Touch Trust exercises done in Theatre since the mid-sixties in Montreal. Watching the performance, I was struck by the time lag that is apparent in the field of dance when compared to the "open form" that experimental theatre has been doing in Montreal for nearly 2 decades. In this same vein, Caemos, Francoise Riopelle's presentation, could be called an exercise in non verbal theatre exploring fluctuating moods with the simple acts of walking and falling.

Vicky Tansey's contribution was mainly in creating a link between acts by involving the audience and providing comic relief. She, as well as other performers tried to integrate the performing area and space in an attempt to demystify dance rather than impose a pre-fabricated structure on an empty space. Sari Hornseein and Ilana Federman on the other hand each provided a different approach. Sari's approach was a comic one, borrowing from vaudeville acts since, as she points out, Fred Astaire and Chaplin were great influences for her. Ilana's choreography—her first—to music by Steve Reich—was a simple study of gestures of expansion and retraction echoed by another dancer. In both cases the pieces were so short that the development of the theme was stopped abruptly.

Next came Diane Thibaudeau from Quebec City who improvised her dancing while tuning in to the aleatory sounds of a live flutist and percussionist. The close interaction here was between dance and music, a dialogue which was equally attempted by Barbara Scales in her *Blues Solo* to the live music provided by a clarinetist.

Louise Gauvreau and her group of women danced a piece which is very hard to pin down as to its precise style and genre. Borrowing from different schools like Bejart, jazz and ritual (girls clad in long white cotton gowns reminiscent of vestal virgins), her most interesting idea was the texture of the fabric she used and the interplay of light on that texture. But that idea was barely touched upon.

After intermission Edouard Lock's solo for Danielle Tardif was completely different. Heedless of audience participation he explored his continuous interest in sensuous aestheticism and pure form and shape. His leitmotif throughout all his works seems to be an obsession with different levels and platforms providing new angles of perception to the danced lines. The most striking element in his piece, however, was the aura of stillness that surrounded the dance which was interpreted in absolute silence.

As a finale Diane Carriere and the group Amarelle presented a series of cameos which showed promise in inventiveness and mood but were cut short. Touching upon fascinating areas of dance exploration: theatre-space-time-weight—none of these cameos provided an in-depth approach. This could be said in general of the whole evening's performance: that it touched upon new approaches to dance, that ideas were plentiful but that they never went beyond the sketching stages. The point of interest remained that there is avant-garde dance in Montreal, and that its exposure is necessary to both public and participants. It showed that dance can be seen as other than an ideal dance form. To these participants dance could be a way of life, or of growth, or a means of integrating life to the medium of art, or yet again an honest display of where they are at—at a particular point in time and space—rather than present a prescribed role and situation in a well rounded performance.

The following are replies to the "thoughts for '78" letter printed in *Spill* #9 with replies received earlier.

Some thoughts on your subjects:

The arts are apolitical. The direction of the arts in Canada over the next decade is highly political. The pattern of public subsidy (government aid, grants) distorts the "right to fail".

It is extremely important that artists be aware of this pattern, the basis for it and how changes can be made in it. To only dance or make dances leaves too much to chance.

Some additional energy should be applied to ground work, preparation, research. There are too many cakes being baked with too much of the recipe missing.

Sincerely,  
Dick Foose  
Dance Consultant  
Alberta Culture

A) I see this as a year of throwing way our 45's and our L.P.'s, returning to the speed of our 78's.

B) Definitely not all on the same place at the same time.

Clive Robertson



## ONLY 280 SHOPPING DAYS TILL CHRISTMAS

Margaret Dragu

*Dance Today in Canada* by Andrew Oxenham with Michael Crabb—a new book running at \$34.95 which will definitely be hanging out on Rosedale coffee tables after this next Christmas shopping rush.

I WANTED very much to like this book because 1. I like picture books and 2. I like the idea of dancers doing dance photographs.

However, this expensive and slick number reminds me of 1. other Canadian pix books I would never buy—like *Call Them Canadians* and *Between Friends* that feel so stuffed with good intentions and etiquette that they look like the C.B.C.

And also reminds me of 2. those American-or-British-dance-and/or-theatre-anthologies. I remember seeing them in libraries when I was a kid: each volume side-by-side looking identical to the next—hello that great year 1945—and that equally great year 1967/1958/1972 etc. etc. etc.

I get this feeling that Andrew and Michael felt that they had to show Canadian Dance and write the history of Canadian Dance for St. Peter's Good Book. I mean—that they felt a strong pressure from the dance community and the government to define the whole bloody thing for the Record. 1. Who is "in it"—Who is "out of it"; 2. the "booktime" ratio of "ballet" to "modern"; 3. the roll call and head pats in the forward history section. That is too big a task to take on—and not the role of a book. A book is a book. I would rather see their personal feelings about Dance they've known/loved/hated. Some good photographs—but so "samey" and "stage-y". I would like to see more of Andrew's feelings—maybe the backstage stuff/and the sweat/the pain/the romance/the classes/the auditions/the offices/the files. Same goes for Michael's overview/statement/history/thoughts. And then—it wouldn't be so dry. Anyways, I've had this book on my kitchen table for 3 days. And I have collected "quicky" reviews from three men who are not in any way connected to the dance business. And here they are:

1. "Looks like a lot of frozen agony and frozen ecstasy."—Mr. E

2. "Whatz this—the way we were?"—Mr. H

3. "I really like this photographer—there's a lot of nice moments here."—Mr. A

And that's the National—my name is Margaret Dragu: good-night.

## CATPOTO

Dena Davida

photo: Jean Pierre Gariépy



a contact improvisation workshop with John Gamble & Mary Cerney from Temple University in Philadelphia

## RINMON

15 Dance Laboratorium  
December 8-10, 1977

J. Groo Bannerman

Murray Geddes stands in one corner of the performing space, dressed in a spiffy business suit, and reads a speech prepared for the hypothetical audience of a "Contact" dance commercial. In interpretive movement and short modern dance sequences, Margaret Atkinson, Melodie Benger, and Sallie Lyons satirize the pompous, hyperbolic, evasive tones of his discussion of the money-making potential in the utilization of space. Margaret and Sallie circle the floor's perimeter opposite each other and Melodie drifts through a slow solo in the center as a taped voice describes a dreamlike experience of limitless space, pleading that, "There must be something out there, mustn't there?" Murray speaks live again, outlining the technical ramifications of the fact that, "Sound is cheap," and the dancers parody his words. The taped voice returns with a tale of a pillow that expands to infinity, the tone climbing to a child-like terror when faced with all-receptive emptiness. The three dancing circle the floor in an accelerating, swirling flow, the direction of movement now out from, not into, center, and then freeze in line as Murray sums up and invites discussion afterwards.

Rinmon strikes again. During the three years of the company's existence, the majority of works by the three choreographers-dancers and one composer (Murray Geddes) have been created for specific locations, such as art galleries and ruinous church. Although the three dancers have strikingly different choreographic concerns, they share a collective viewpoint on the

importance of expanding the traditional concept of "performance space". Considering this, it's somewhat surprising that, during *Dialogue*, and throughout the entire program, no use was made of 15 Dance Laboratorium's foyer, which at the time of the performance was bigger than the theatre area. However, Rinmon's performing energy, always dynamic, has developed a conceptual polish as well, and the company's emphasis on the contribution of space as an integral aspect of dance was subtle yet unmistakable.

In Sallie Lyons' *Real Suite*, a madcap pas de huit for four dancers and chairs, subtitled *Waiting*, begins from the furthest corners of the floor and moves together into arranged masses and apart again at seemingly random points about the space. The gently shifting poses and abstract positionings of the dancers with the chairs gradually builds to a cacophony of chair-scrappings and smashings into new places, and a loud, babbled listing of personal data by each dancer. *Waiting* dissolves into *Pardon*, as Murray, sitting at one side of the room with his face to a wall, and Sallie, sitting on the other side in the audience, call to each other over the noise of the dancers' voices. When the repeated listings of personal data fades out, Sallie and Murray recite seemingly unrelated monologues twice in sequence, with slight variations between the two versions. The resultant conversation conveys a strong sense of alienation and loss.

Everyone but Sallie exits, and she lights a cigarette for her solo, *Killing Time*. She moves about the space, the cigarette leading, smoking in quick, sucking puffs during poses and promenades. The movement ranges from high-fashion modelling to let's-

Catpoto is a group of four Montreal women (Gurney Bolster, Dena Davida, Carol Harwood, and Evelyn Ginzburg). We came together in October, 1977 after having worked separately with Contact Improvisation and other dance/movement forms. We felt that the development in our individual work would best be achieved within a collective. We are now team teaching three classes of Contact Improvisation in Montreal and Quebec City.

Contact Improvisation is a contemporary dance form originated by Steve Paxton in 1972 in the United States. It is based on the laws of momentum, weight, and gravity as related to the flow of bodies moving through space. It focuses on communication as two or more bodies share information about each other's activities through a point of physical contact.

Our dance is about process, not a fixed set of technical movement. It is the expression of ourselves as individuals and as a group, totally spontaneous at the moment of performance.

fool-around-and-see-what-we-can-do-with-this-here. Each gesture and posturing, no matter how exaggerated or stylized, is amazingly "right"; just that and nothing else. In a lunging penché she kills the cigarette and ends a work that seems to express a struggle against facade that uses humour as its major defense.

Margaret Atkinson presented two works at this performance. *Horse* is an animalistic solo, in part improvisational. With eyes closed, Margaret holds a rope band nailed to the wall, stamping and pawing gently on the floor with one foot as she blows and snorts loosely. She releases the rope and swings into a high-stepping run, tossing her head and arching her back in rears at each change of direction. The evocation was overwhelmingly real to the point of transformation: Margaret looked more like a horse everytime she galloped past my seat.

Keith Jarrett's *Koln Concert Part 1* is the music for *Evening Dance*, a beautifully lyrical outpouring of joy in pure dance that often reaches ecstasy. The independent movement of the five dancers is interwoven harmoniously in a wavelike flow, brought together into repeated sequences of a swift, striding walk, forwards and backwards on the diagonal, with sweeping arms. The open luxuriant in modern dance is broken occasionally by sections in which the dancers collect at one side of the space and jes' boogie. The only minor irritation of these sections is that none of the other dancers move like Margaret, a jittering, feet-flashing revelry that reflects every piano note in movement. That indescribable solution of sound and dance termed the musicality of the choreography is breathtaking: Jarrett's genius is shared, not smothered.

## REFERENCE SOURCES FOR THE NEW CHOREOGRAPHY



"The imperial affairs are in disorder," replied Sung Chiang (to General Kuan Sheng), "and corrupt officials are in power; loyal men are ignored; and covetous men are employed. This results in the suffering of the people. We are the agents of heaven, and have no personal aims."

Kuan Sheng shouted, "It is clear that you are a brigand. Which heaven has appointed you? My troops carry out the Son of Heaven's wish, but you have only fine words on your side. If you don't dismount at once, I will have you cut into many pieces."

Upon hearing this Chin Ming was angry, and dashed from the rear on horseback. At the same moment Lin Ch'ung did the same. Kuan Sheng however, stood his ground, and fought with the two. The three horses circled around like a small whirlwind. Sung Chiang called to the gongs to summon the two leaders to come back, and when they returned Chin Ming protested, "We could have captured that man. Why did you stop us?"

Sung Chiang replied in a loud voice, "We are honest and upright, and we do not like to see two men attacking one. It is not fair. If you had captured him you

could not capture his mind. He is a loyal and devoted official, and the spirits of his ancestors must be very proud of him. If we could win him over I would immediately resign in his favor."

Shih Nai-an, *Water Margin*, 1250?

Directed by the authentic or perverted magnificence, which is man's spirit, movement is the most powerful and dangerous art medium known.

Martha Graham, *A Modern Dancer's Primer for Action*, 1941

The guerilla war is a guerilla war because one side does not have the men and/or equipment to fight a conventional war. The guerilla war is not fought for territory in the tactical sense. It is a war of attrition, fought to wear down the enemy until he loses the ability or will to fight. At this point the guerilla turns to conventional tactics for his final push.

Tactically, the guerilla has a few simple rules...Fight when you can win...retreat when you cannot...when the enemy attacks—withdraw...when he retreats—attack...when he defends—harass.

### Peter Dudar

The ambush is executed by allowing and/or encouraging the enemy to move into a zone prepared by you where you can wipe him out. Once the enemy has entered this zone he must be trapped in it and annihilated.

17. Debrief to see what new information you have gained about enemy's weapons, formation, response and effectiveness.

18. Apply this knowledge to your next ambush.

Terry P. Edwards, *The Mercenary's Manual*, 1976

One cannot accomplish feats of greatness in a normal frame of mind. One must turn fanatic and develop a mania for dying. By the time one develops powers of discernment it is already too late to put them into effect.

Jocho Yamamoto, *Hagakure*, 1659-1719

From 1917 into the early twenties, the congruence of avant-garde art and radical ideology, the fusion of form and content (so hotly debated in the West ever since...) existed in action. For a brief glowing second in historical time, the commitments of the vanguard artist

and the society around him almost coincided. This achievement of the October revolution will never be eradicated; yet, just as the promise of a new society faded into the gruesome obscenities of Stalin's state-capitalist totalitarianism, so did the wedding of the avant-garde and the state prove temporal. The eternal tension between organized society and creative artist reasserted itself in the particularly brutal form of suicides, secret deaths, exile, emigration or abject surrender.

Amos Vogel, *Film as a Subversive Art*, 1974

"Sung Chiang, commander of Liang Shan Po, replies to Tseng Lung, headman of the Tseng T'ou Shih. It has always been a fact that a country without confidence among the people must become extinct in the end; without propriety soon become of no account. Unjust gains must be robbed, generals without bravery must soon be defeated. These are definite laws. Liang Shan Po and your village had no enmity before, and we both guarded our domains respectively. But recently you did a wicked thing, and so we are now enemies. If, however, you wish to have peace then you must return to us the horses you stole, and also hand over to us Yu Pao-ssu who stole the horses. You must also give money to our men. If you are sincere you must not treat lightly the proper procedure."

Shih Nai-an, *Water Margin*, 1250?

And more than once he's gone home with a bloody nose. He's not like them, and they can't ignore it

So they all hate him for it

HOME OF THE BRAVE, LAND OF THE FREE  
OH, WHY WON'T THEY LET HIM BE  
WHAT HE WANTS TO BE.

Everybody says that I shouldn't take his part,

But when they hold him down  
How it breaks my heart.

Mann/Weil (Phil Spector/Bonnie and the Treasures), *Home of the Brave*, 1965

photo: from the film *2 Deadly Women*, directed by Peter Dudar, starring Lily Eng and Deborah Townsend. Still by Kalli Paakspuu, blowup by Peter Dudar.

cont.'d from page 7

E: Oh no. I have that awareness of the corner being ridiculous but at the same time it's totally significant and important to me.

V: What we did doesn't threaten that corner at all.

E: No, it's not a matter of threatening...—well, I suppose maybe it is threatening because it's a point of view which I wanted to be presented at A Space.

V: It's unfortunate that that illusion still

## JENNIFER MASCALL EXPLODES A SPACE: A SOLELY SUBJECTIVE SOLILOQUY

A Space

January 6-7, 1978

Jennifer Mascall

I'd like to describe every movement, to detail each miniscule and impeccable element, relate each to each other and each to the whole. I'd like to examine each level, one by one, in all their ramifications, to show the vast depth and scope of the work. Fortunately, not only is this impossible, but I also know that the destructive process of dissection rarely, if ever, leads to understanding. Yet what can possibly be said about such a work?

Just that, I guess, that it is of a quality that awes me, that overwhelms me, that makes me want to pull funny faces to the mirror and gibber like an idiot.

Jennifer Mascall stands, as if in a pause for thought. Her eyes are directed in a ruminating gaze along the floor. She is in the midst of a section in which she names each movement as she executes it, then walks in a circle, saying, "Going to write it down," as if she was in a studio, preparing for the piece. To one side are three TV sets in a row. The middle set reflects her performance in direct transmission from a video camera in the audience. The two outside sets are both playing a videotape of the same performance done in a studio.

She raises a hand and scratches her head. She waits for it, with timing stretching to its precise tensional peak, and says, "Scratches her head." Immediately echoing, the figures on the TV screens say, "Scratches her head."

In the beginning, one pays admission and receives a square of paper to write comments on after the end. From start to finish, the work is caviar-packed revelation of the process of creating a dance piece. Each egg of an idea is surrounded and supported by other egg ideas, the whole a pungent, epicurean feast for the psyche. The structure spirals simultaneously inward and outward through dance and dancing, each new section opening the scope of the work further like the enlarging chambers of a nautilus shell. The entirety is tighter than a wealthy wino by eleven p.m.

In the first section of the work, Jennifer discusses the piece with two other Jennifers, who are on videotape, as if this conversation is a record of her thought processes while planning it.

maintains—that there is a point of view. A dominant point of view.

P: I think there's room at A Space for all kinds of dance.

E: I suppose there's always been a tendency in the corner of any art form that's the newest and the most experimental to feel locked out by the mainstream so there's a big thrust to find a home, to establish your own power base. That's what ANNPAC is about.

The dialogue covers almost every aspect of the piece, props, costume, the space, its formulating purposes, how it will be perceived; each from the viewpoint of whether it will create fictional or non-fictional dance. Jennifer reads her lines from a cuecard she has taken off the wall. The wall is covered with groups of paper sheets which are in their turn covered with writing. Along the bottom of the wall is a row of blank sheets and as she converses, Jennifer alternately gazes into the audience and quickly draws rows of small lettered squares along these sheets. So much for the externals.

What Jennifer is doing, as she discusses, looks, and draws, is internally creating and memorizing a dance piece based on seven categories of positions that the people in the audience may or may not be in.

One of the inspired concerns of new dance as an art form and of many independent choreographers within the genre is to strip away the facade of mystic that traditionally surrounds Dance and dancers. New dance seeks to remove itself from the emotionally nauseating role of the ballerina as an ethereal will-o'-wisp wafting buoyantly across the stage on the waves of applause, or the intellectually absurd role of the modern dancer as a revealer of great universal truths, and any of the other imprisoning stereotypes of dance. More vitally, new dance seeks to detach itself from the spiritually barren delusion that dance is a synthetic, computerized language pieced together in a hidden, mirror-introverting studio, and to show that it's an active, creative force to be found in everything.

Jennifer Mascall opens this matrix of thinking into another dimension, and in a tesseract leap from "D" to "W", strikes to the core of the issue. What is real movement? Why?

Is it possible for movement to be non-fictional? Is it possible for it to be fictional? Is it possible to divide dance into these categories? What factor makes this movement, this phrase, this sequence, this composition, this piece; fictional, and this other, non-fictional? Intention? Reception? Inspiration? Projection? Association?

Jennifer stands with her back to the audience, executing a series of arm movements as she recites a list of as many of the anatomical names for the muscles contributing to the movements as she can fit into time. There are three of these lectures. When she ends each one, the two outside TV sets show her making the same movements, with bare back, in a studio. As the video-tapes play, she performs the dance she had created during the first part of the work.

It would be difficult to display a more concrete example of non-fictional movement. The humour of Jennifer's

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## THE SLEEPING BEAUTY

National Ballet of Canada  
O'Keefe Centre  
February 8-11, 1978

Graham Jackson

There's so much wrong with the National Ballet's *Sleeping Beauty*, it's not even funny. Although I wish I could laugh. It's been said before and I'll say it again: this production is grossly overdressed, or rather over-stuffed like one of those unreal-looking Christmas turkeys you see in the pages of *House and Garden*. The dancers can barely move under the weight of their wigs, headdresses, and robes. The set, too, overwhelm the dancers, encroaching on their territory like some menacing, self-perpetuating automaton—and when the third act curtain goes up you know why Imperial Russia collapsed. All that waste of money! And for what? The only answer that comes to mind is, "To shock the jaded palate."

But the decor isn't all to blame: theatrically speaking, the production is just as clumsy. Carabosse's entrance is robbed of a lot of punch by having her burst through a mirror (so obviously made of paper) on stage level rather than having her swoop in from above, with her attendant gargoyles or, as is supposed to happen, ride in on a chariot. And why does Aurora so sweetly accept a bouquet from the undisguised Carabosse and why does nobody try to wrest the bouquet from her? Why, too, does Carabosse appear a few seconds later on the stairs in a disguise (a hooded cloak) after all the damage has been done? She hovers there threateningly for a minute brandishing a wooden staff and then scuttles off stage only to return shortly in the same cloak with her own staff (presumably it bears her crest): I don't understand the theatrical significance of this little ritual especially as no one on stage is paying the slightest attention to her. And the ensuing duel in which Carabosse challenges all four of Aurora's suitors at the same time, causing them to run one another through with their swords instead of her, has always been unconvincingly staged—talk about faked deaths!—and this year seemed even more so.

And—still on the subject of Carabosse—why does she lose all her youth and vigour, her glamour by the third act? Sure, 100 years have passed, but she's a fairy, isn't she? The Lilac Fairy doesn't alter a whit or, are we to see Carabosse's transformation as the wages of evil? If we are, then why just loss of her tiara? Why isn't Carabosse changed into a stooped and withered old crone? And, finally, would any fairy as threatening as Carabosse is supposed to be, be alarmed by the entrance of such a pabulum and milk creature like the Lilac Fairy? Surely, the latter should give us a greater sense of the power she possesses than she projects in

this Beauty. If I had been Carabosse, I would have laughed at the sight of my adversary making her grand entrance with a strobe light flashing behind her like some faded sixties acid-rock star. I mean—how tacky!

I keep referring to the character of Carabosse not because she is the only representative of the ballet's theatrical ham-handedness† but because she's the character on whom so much of the action hinges: she is, as they used to say in English classes, pivotal. And this year, for the first time in many years, she was given a strong, clearly-defined performance, one that in its clarity served to accentuate the ballet's dramatic weaknesses and, by comparison, to show how little attention the other dancers are giving the drama. The performer was, of course, Lois Smith. She made the mime passages, particularly in her initial confrontation with King, Queen, and Catalabutte, ring with dire prophecy: there wasn't a fuzzy or ill-conceived moment in any of it. Some of the other performers seemed to gain from Smith's authoritative presence, noticeably Susa Menck as the Queen, her plea for the lives of three women caught, after the King's ban, with knitting needles, was in fact one of the ballet's only touching moments.

Thomas Shramek's debut in the role of Florimund was another—and it was all but ignored in the daily press. Schramek isn't a strong, steady dancer and Florimund needs that, but he is nice to look at on stage. He doesn't turn every movement sequence into a case of heroics. Perhaps, he's too relaxed, but in his ease he projects something more real, more accessible, more human than the cardboard gallants of Augustyn and Schaufuss. He doesn't come equipped with the heavy, muscle-bound ass and legs of the other two either and is thus able to give the steps a lighter, more quixotic feel, one appropriate to a Prince who is moody and restless and doesn't know why. The long second act solo which Nureyev interpolated into Petipa's choreography had something with Schramek it doesn't have when danced by your standard, sturdy ballet Prince: it had vulnerability. And that, though he himself has never really projected it, is just what Nureyev saw his Prince conveying. Let me tell you, I'll take a few fudged landings and some blurred legwork anyday for Schramek's quietly affecting vulnerability.

God knows, this *Sleeping Beauty* could use a lot more of the same.

†There are worse examples: Florimund's contrived triumph at darts or the noisy entrance of the naiads on a tiered platform à la Busby Berkeley in Act II, to name but two.

## MEREDITH MONK/ THE HOUSE

Elinor Galbraith

During the performance of the first piece *Plateau* I tried to imagine someone else doing the same piece. I realized that Meredith Monk was inseparable from the work. In her imagery, her style, she has become a totality of person, life, creator, performer. There seems to be no separation of elements. The honesty and clarity of her imagery is intensely personal and could so easily become self indulgent, but inherent in her work is an enormous respect for the audience. She gives us a beginning, an end, she takes us on a journey, she shares her experience of life with us. Her approach is one of abstraction, actions simplified, words guttural intonations of the voice. It is another reality she has created, one that closely parallels our own. We look on and laugh at ourselves.

The second piece, *Tablet*, was a musical composition for three voices, recorder and piano. Again the content relied on the abstraction of the human voice, interaction of rhythms and most often the mimicry of the emotional quality of vocalization within conversation. The piece achieved structure by reverting between its flights of fantasy to simple melodic rhythms on the piano. A subtle lyrical quality emerged and one was left with images of musical harmony and emotional colour. The technique is not original, but again it was the personal vision of the composer that made the composition a unique experience.

Paris, a collaborative work by Ping Chong and Meredith Monk is the first piece in the travelogue series, *Paris/Venice/chacon/Milan*. Ping Chong and Monk presented us with two subtly understated characters that were sometimes pathetic and sometimes strong and full of joy. At times their clowning came so close to tragedy that the audience had to laugh to avoid facing the reality of what the characters represented. Other parts were straight slapstick and it amazed me how perfectly such cliché stunts work so beautifully.

All her pieces were structured and performed with an incredible attention to detail. I believed in every word and action and left knowing that she believes totally in her work. There was no artifice, only one woman's statement on how she sees the world and how that vision can be transformed into the medium of performing arts. In this she has found a formula for capturing and preserving some of the magic she has found in living.

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dry, analytical tone enunciating the jaw-breaking polysyllables, the juxtapositioning of taped and live movement, the connotations of her intricate, comprehensive dialogue about the piece; all mesh to fling concepts away from the work's core like the arms of an exploding galaxy, ideas sparkling like silently roaring stars. Jennifer effortlessly lifts the state of the art above that flat circle called the horizon, to quietly point at the vast uncharted realms beyond.

She look out of the TV screen, lifts a camera to take a frozen image of her own piece, examines it through binoculars, a huge magnifying glass, a kaleidoscope, (a kaleidoscope!) on a videotape of her piece, made while it was being prepared, playing while it is being performed, wondering how it will be perceived—past, present, and future peering out from within, without, within, without...She maintains a running commentary, on tape and live both, about what she is doing, why she is doing it, and the various ways it may be perceived; always calling herself "Jennifer", "she", or "her". The few times she uses the pronoun "I" quickly become startling. The levels of identity is yet another dimension of the work. For instance, there are at least nine Jennifers in the half-hour long piece.

A short story is read on the Romeo-and-Juliet motif of the doomed-love theme. On the outside TV screens, a couple enact a bizarre suicide scene in front of a priest. Jennifer interprets the poignant tragedy in dance, with many repeated sequences of lyrical backbends and gently curving arms. In between the four sections of this part she walks over and bites an edge of one of the square pillars in the space. As one of the conversational Jennifers, approximately twenty minutes before, had announced, "This is the end," so does Jennifer, and she exits.

Body moving like a willow, like a steamshovel, like a frog, Jennifer Mascall strides across the theatre of the mind as if she owned these peaks. Thought gleams and flashes in every moment of the work, moving in clear, direct lines: the inescapable presence of the wall, "Why does she bite the pillar?" the reading of her choreographic notes while the sequences are being performed, "At no time do the hands clap," the fantastically creative inclusion of the audience, the encompassing perception of viewpoint, the value of a university education; a Lewis Carrollian madness permeating the work of an imagination so rich that it went out to lunch one day and never got around to going back.

Like a sand-anchored boulder, her performance is executed with a colossally centered calm, a laser focus that makes even the event of people entering late and being seated simply an absorbed and related element of the piece. Jennifer's stage presence is electrifying—alive, alive-oh—her

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Augustyn to perhaps his best advantage, allowing him to demonstrate the exquisite purity of his line and the lyrical clarity of his movement. Yet his dancing remains circumspect and reserved. The lack in his dancing is one of gusto and exhilaration. He looks as if he doesn't really trust himself on stage, which is why it's such a reoccurring shock when his partner does. He brings to his solos that same quality he brings to his partnering, the ability to be unnoticeable.

The very idea of making a comparative analysis between various versions of *Swan Lake*, including the radical departure from tradition Erik Bruhn choreographed for the National, seems like pedantic foppiness to me. The central choreographic concern of the ballet, swan-like movement and movement patterns, is immutable, and the central theme, the dramatic conflict between good and evil as represented by ideal and physical love, has at least been around long enough to arouse a conditioned reflex. On another level, I find it difficult to believe that anyone would take the composition of the ballet that seriously. It is a fairy tale.

Approximately half the cast are women who spend their days changing back and forth between swan and human form. Once the Transylvanian melodrama and connotations of bestiality inherent in the ballet have been accepted, anything else becomes trivial. If one can swallow a camel like thaumaturgic transformation, why strain at a gnat like a psychological motivation or plot? Why do hockey players chase a black rubber disk up and down an arena of ice by hitting it with sticks? Who cares? Hockey can be a wildly exciting sport to watch. *Swan Lake* is an overwhelmingly beautiful ballet.

Yet as long as professional choreographers and established great dancers trying out their skills continue to produce a seemingly endless proliferation of variations on the same ballets in the name of creativity, it will continue to be one of the functions of a critic to review them. And Bruhn's version of *Swan Lake* has received a great deal of reviewing over the years. The common viewpoint is that it is inferior to the standard production. I disagree emphatically.

The traditional *Swan Lake* tells of a Prince ordered by his mother, the Queen, on the day of his coming of age, that he must soon marry and give up his frivolous ways. Distressed by this news, the Prince rushes into the forest at midnight, with the crossbow his mother gave him for his birthday, in order to shoot some swans with his friends. He meets Odette in a forest clearing, while she is transforming into a woman and still half-swan, half-human, and instantly falls in love with her. Why he does so is questionable but let it pass. Odette tells him she has been enchanted by the evil sorcerer, Von Rotbart, into spending her life as a swan, except from midnight 'til dawn, until a man swears

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eternal fidelity to her and marries her, which would break the spell. But if the man swore eternal fidelity and then broke his vow, she would die. The Prince swears eternal fidelity to Odette, meets Von Rotbart, and rushes back to the castle to prepare for the ball at which his mother has told him to choose a wife.

Von Rotbart arrives at the ball with his daughter, Odile, whom he has transformed into the image of Odette. Odile comes on strong to the Prince and he asks for her hand in marriage. Von Rotbart demands an oath of fidelity, the Prince swears and thus breaks his vow to Odette, Von Rotbart and Odile laugh with triumph, and the Prince rushes back to the forest to find Odette and beg her forgiveness. In most versions they then die, usually by jumping or being pushed into the lake. In some versions, they undergo apotheosis and Von Rotbart is destroyed by the godlike power of their love.

What is wrong with this plot? A lot. But the central point of contention is a matter of characterization. It's very simple. Why is the Prince so easily duped, by a man who is so obviously the quintessence of evil, by a woman who is behaving in such a totally different manner from when he first met her, into swearing eternal fidelity again, to the wrong woman? Because the Prince is a fool. It is dramatically not enough for a character's tragic flaw to be stupidity. To a large extent, the leading roles of classical ballet function as the heroes and heroines of romantic fantasy and the collective unconscious. It's impossible to believe in a stupid Prince.

This renders any dramatic point to Odette's tragedy meaningless. It transmutes her tragedy into a misfortune. She happens to meet and be sworn eternal fidelity to by a man who turns out to be an intellectual pygmy. Bad luck. She loses her single hope of breaking Von Rotbart's spell by the act of a blithering idiot. This isn't a tragedy. It's a farce. The Prince's idiocy renders meaningless any point to his and Odette's mutual destruction, as well. Is he supposed to somehow function better after he's dead?

Bruhn's version presents a Prince who is lonely, confused, uncertain of what he wants or needs and who, "has a thing about his mother." (Bruhn; "Beyond Technique"; *Dance Perspectives* #42) He rebels against his mother, comes under the sway of another maternal image, the Black Queen, and is offered the spiritual and then the physical aspects of love, in order to "test his strength as a man." Because of his feelings for his mother, he is confused about what love is, and makes the wrong choice. Realizing his mistake, he chooses to die rather than lose the spiritual love he has found. Odette is left to live, "like a symbol of what he died for. He did not die in vain, for the ideal remains, a challenge to any

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man who has this within him."

Nowadays, this sounds somewhat euphoric, yet it's a masterpiece of dramatic verisimilitude and romantic vision in comparison with the standard version. Bruhn's *Swan Lake* is, as well, a solid work of compositional and choreographic clarity. He's retained the best of the Petipa-Ivanov choreography which is, naturally, a large amount. His long solo for the Prince, in Act I, is, in my opinion, also a masterpiece. Each movement sequence flows into the next with a seamless grace that's at once vibrant with power and eloquent in its expression. The corps work that is most distinctly his, in Act IV, is ravishing. The flowing circular groupings of the swans and their interweaving lines in sideways bourée are unforgettable.

The traditional *Swan Lake*, in comparison to this, looks like vaudeville. The laughable histrionics of Von Rotbart emerge as the central figure of camp in a theatrical spectacular aimed towards supplying the audience with a heavy load of melodrama and a refreshing vacation from thought.

Theatrical spectacles were what the National had to offer in the other two major productions of the season, *Sleeping Beauty* and *Romeo and Juliet*. I've not real quarrel with Nureyev's production and staging for Petipa's *Sleeping Beauty*. His alterations in Petipa's choreography are bland but inoffensive (the pomposity of Prince Florimund's solo in Act II, for instance, is really rather droll) and simply as a theatrical spectacular, it's a gorgeous one, with stupendous sets and costumes by Nicholas Georgiadis. *Sleeping Beauty* is saved for me as a ballet because it contains dancing. The good and bad fairies, the petty, mindless, tyrant of a king, the simpering piece of fluff that is the Princess, the Prince whose classical ideal is a girl who's been dead to the world for the past one hundred years, the pomp-and-special-effects direction of the production are all cancelled out by the fact that the ballet starts dancing when another ballet would stop.

Kain, opening night, took the Rose Adagio and drove it close to deliverance from bodily limits with a crimson passion and reckless musical abandon that revealed her every technical virtuosity and flaw like a demonstration lecture. The frantic jerks of her torso, as she virtually forced her body to remain on point in the last supported attitude, said everything one needs to know about how far she can take her talent. Raymond Smith gave a brilliant Bluebird, by the sheer sense of soaring that he danced on top of. Gloria Luoma somehow saved the usually embarrassing coquettishness of the Pussycats pas de deux, probably with her sincerity.

John Cranko's *Romeo and Juliet* is a work that amply demonstrates whatever talent for mime the dancers of the National have. It is Shakespeare's

play, in a condensed version, done with music instead of dialogue, that has several short pieces of dancing in it. As theatre, it's adequate. As a ballet...? It's difficult to judge. Again, as with *The Dream*, I gain the impression that Cranko's *Romeo and Juliet* may be a reasonably entertaining ballet that's good points are being covered up by the National's flat performance. Yet what choreography there is in the ballet is further reduced by Cranko's repetition of almost every movement sequence immediately after it is first performed.

The first dance, of four cavaliers, begins with them in a diamond shape, a cavalier representing each point of the diamond, and with one cavalier point towards the front of the stage. They are standing upstage and stage left and then begin a swift walk on the diagonal to downstage and stageright. As they reach the front of stage they change the diamond shape into a square, each cavalier as a corner and with one side of the square towards the audience so that there are two cavaliers in front and two cavaliers immediately behind them. Facing stageleft, the four cavaliers hop with one leg extended across the front of the stage to the downstage and stageleft corner maintaining the shape of a square between them. They stop at the corner and face the audience for several turns in place with the gesturing leg. Then the two outside cavaliers hop over the backs of the two others, moving back the way they came, stageright, and the two others hop over them, still moving stageright. This brings them to centerstage and they turn and face stageleft. Then pairs of cavaliers hop over each others' backs again, this time moving upstage, which takes them back to their original stage position. And then they do the whole thing all over again.

The choreographic motif of immediate repetition runs through the entire ballet. A simple and subtle movement idea, it's the sort of thing that can have a powerful impact if it has a strong basis. But Cranko's choreography isn't very imaginative, nor is it very musical. The basic steps themselves are at fault. Were they interesting to begin with, the repetition of them would be interesting as well, in a different way. Moreover, it's a movement idea that is used in the wrong ballet.

Cranko's choreography falls flat in the three pas de deux for Juliet and Romeo. It's impossible to convey Romeo's impetuosity, Juliet's joyous reeling under love's coupe de foudre, and the reasonless charge of their doom, with choreography that is as predictable as a telephone number. The pas de deux are very pretty and they express a romantic ideal very well. But they are not *Romeo and Juliet*.

*The Party*, James Kudelka's work, suffers from the same limitation. The group movement basically consists of repetition in a two-dimensional travel back and forth across the stage. The

three pas de deux, two erotic and one tender, are fuzzy in line and hemmed in spatially. *The Party* isn't a terrible ballet; the music (Benjamin Britten's *Variations of a Theme of Frank Bridge*, Op. 10) is a constant delight, the situation is universal and the movement characterization and emotional expression are polished and succinct. As a workshop ballet, it's well above average and certainly deserving of praise. In the role of a ballet to be shown internationally, by a company representing Canada, as an example of eminent Canadian choreography, *The Party* is an embarrassment. The central problem of the ballet is that nothing happens. No person changes, no situation changes, and nothing is resolved. As *The Hostess* picks up the shawl forgotten by *The Single Girl* we are left with the blank statement that things, and people too, get left behind, and sometimes this is sad. Too much time is taken to make such a simple point, at the flat ending of a two-dimensional work. *The Party* is one episode of a balletic soap opera.

John Neumier's *Don Juan* is a modern ballet, highly theatrical, with huge funeral processions, dramatic lighting changes, recorded psychological analyses of Don Juan's character over the loudspeakers, and a deeply symbolic, almost invisible scrim between the action and the audience. There's a fatalistic fascination in Neumeier's interpretation of Don Juan as a searcher for an ideal in his seduction and rejection of 1003 women, only to discover that his ideal is death. The heavy symbolism of the reoccurring movement themes became painful eventually, in particular a lift of various women holding themselves rigid in the shape of a cross. Dona Ana de Ulloa has a solo of frustration and bitterness against Juan and Vanessa Harwood put out every ounce of her blatant hamming and shoddy technique to burn up the stage with it. Mary Jago seemed best for the Lady in White, Juan's Angel of Death, her glacial stage presence and the finicky, crystalline precision of her dancing moving Juan through their long, final pas de deux to the exquisitely tender moment of his death with a mathematical inevitability that was more compassionate than any poetic lyricism could be.

It was a brilliant stroke by Alexander Grant, artistic director of the National, to put *The Dream* and *Don Juan* back to back three nights running. Observing the differences and similarities in the two works was a fascinating process. The same appeal exists in the single work *Collective Symphony*, since it's a collaboration between the three co-artistic directors of the Dutch National Ballet. An abstract modern ballet (albeit one with strong emotional connotations) the close similarities in the choreographers' styles gives it a solid cohesive whole, while the differences are striking and always exciting. The ballet

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photo: Ben Holzberg

## AU COURANT

Brian Robinson

The worst is over, the thaw is on its way, after a period of sporadic happenings the hibernation energy has begun to erupt in a flurry of activities—the First Annual International Salvatore Quannucci Memorial (Party) hosted by the Gregs, Michael, Claudia and Randy of Browning Avenue on March 11 was a S.R.O. event—*Theatre Second Floor* hosted a Labatt's sponsored Ides of March experience in honour of their current production. *Julius Caesar—The Hummers* and company are off to the Big Apple in mid April, they're doing performances of *Patty and The Bible...* at *The Kitchen* (Centre for Video and Music), 59 Wooster St., N.Y.C.—Interested in performing at the *Dance in Canada Conference* in August in Vancouver? April 15 is deadline for inquiries, call Nikki Abraham, (new business manager for the DIC Association and the magazine) 368-4793—*Grant Strate* is preparing a special performance of his new work as a benefit for *Dance in Canada*, Tuesday, April 18 at the

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projection, in stillness or razor-slicing swiftness, so clear that one receives an outpouring of intense peace, surety, and ease. There is not the slightest obstacle between what she is saying, herself, and the audience.

Hey! Ye gods that be, of the coffer and the commission, spill out your largess to this outrageous artist, who does not need your charity or your confidence at all. Selfishly, I want to know that I can continue to look out from the audience to meet a mind of that caliber in the center of that lit space, to walk out of the theatre with the sensation of having been stuffed to the last neuron, and to be re-inspired by the awareness that somewhere out there, there actually are masterpieces.

Benger with music by Murray Geddes, and the participation of Sallie Lyons and Margaret Atkinson on March 19—*Toronto Dance Theatre's* production of *Donald Hime's Babar* returns to the *St. Lawrence Centre Town Hall* during *March Easter Break—Winnipeg's Contemporary Dancers* eastern tour included Toronto, Guelph, St. Catharines, and Montreal—*New York's Murray Louis Dance Company* are at the *Talbot Theatre, London, Ont.*, March 25—a *Contact Improvisation Movement Workshop: Steve Paxton and Nancy Stark Smith* (open to all) is at *A Space*, 85 St. Nicholas St. (964-3627) beginning April 19 with a special performance by Paxton and Smith at *15 Dance Lab* on Saturday, April 22 at 8:30—*Miriam Adams* presents *Watch Me Dance You Bastards*, April 28 and 29, 9 p.m. at *A Space*, participating dancers are *Lawrence Adams, Ricardo Abreut, Elizabeth Chitty, Nicholas Davis, Terrill Maguire.*

*Louise Garfield* is back again with her *Balloon Slices*, March 24-26, March 31-April 2 at *15 Dance Lab—D.I.C. Regional Rep's Mauryne Allan* (B.C.) and *Sonja Barton* (Sask.) are planning to attend the *National DIC Board Meetings* in Toronto, April 29 and 30. An Ontario event is planned at the DIC offices, 3 Church St., Friday evening April 28—*The C.A.P.H.E.R. Dance Committee Conference Dance and the Child* is in Edmonton, July 25-27. *Joyce Boorman* is chairing the conference—*marshalore, Terry McGlade and Marien Lewis* (the Fifth Network) are organizing a *National Conference* for independent video producers to be held in Toronto, Sept. 7-10. For more info. write to 85 St. Nicholas St., Toronto—hope to see you all next issue after our spring tune-up.



## ARTS LOAN FUND

The Toronto Arts Council announces the creation of an Arts Loan Fund for the use of Toronto artists and cultural organizations in need of short term assistance.

The Board of the Council consists of persons involved with the arts in a professional capacity. To date the council has been responsible for advising the City on policy towards arts organizations in Toronto and on the expenditure of the City's annual cultural grants. The Arts Loan Fund will increase the Toronto Arts Council's ability to assist the arts in a timely and discriminating manner.

As the first of its kind anywhere, the Arts Loan Fund has been enthusiastically welcomed by Ontario's Minister of Culture and Recreation and Deputy Premier, the Honourable R.W. Welch. The Province has committed itself to matching the initial capital raised by the Toronto Arts Council for the Arts Loan Fund.

Any professional artist resident in the City of Toronto or any arts organization based therein may apply for a loan. Loans will be made for both bridging financing of current projects and for the planning and execution of future commitments. A theatre group, for instance, may need funds to build the sets for a production or to meet an unexpected emergency and will be able to repay from box office receipts; an artist may need funds to buy materials for a commission and can repay after the work is completed; or grants may be late in arriving and a loan can cover operating costs until the grant arrives.

Initially, because total funds available are still small, the maximum loan available will be \$3,500. to an organization or \$1,000. to an individual. The maximum duration of a loan will normally be 4 months and interest will be charged.

Enquiries and applications must be made by letter to:

The Toronto Arts Council  
Suite 401  
Toronto, Ontario.  
M5E 1E3

All relevant financial information should accompany the letter of application.

Since the City of Toronto, through its membership in the Metropolitan Federation, is already responsible for helping to fund the large arts organizations located in Toronto, such as the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, the Canadian Opera Company, the Art Gallery of Ontario, the National Ballet of Canada, the Toronto Arts Council has concentrated its attention on smaller groups and individuals. In 1977, for example, the City of Toronto, upon recommendations of the Toronto Arts Council, has made grants ranging from \$500. to \$8,000. in the fields of film, theatre, visual arts, design and music.

Current Board Members of the Toronto Arts Council are:

Ron Thom, Chairman  
Marie Day  
Budge Crawley  
William Kilbourn  
Harry Malcolmson  
Mary Morrison  
Michael de Pencier  
Brian Robinson  
John Sime  
Lois Smith

Harry Malcolmson is Legal Counsel and Secretary of the Corporation.

The first two loans awarded by the Toronto Arts Council are to Theatre Plus and to Comus Music Theatre. Theatre Plus, now completing its 5th season, is the resident summer company at the St. Lawrence Centre for the Performing Arts. Comus announced it will be producing the comic opera *La Serva Cadrona* as part of the Toronto Spring Festival in 1978.

For further information please contact:

Julie Reka (Rickerd)  
929-5177



Miriam & Lawrence Adams, "Watch Me Dance You Bastards" photo: Lynn Rotin

POSTLUDE TO ANDROGYNOUS ART  
(cont'd from SPILL #7) or  
S&M, M&B, and all that's left:  
No More

Bruce Wilson

My art is whatever I do at the moment. Seven days a month I work in a half-way house with people who are trying to CHANGE their lives. The rest of the time I spend looking after other kinds of people (your "so-called" average) but as a superintendent, trying to CHANGE living conditions in a hundred year old apartment building, managed by a slum-landlord capitalist pig, I suppose. Whatever time is left I write this or whatever else comes into my head. Or, get high on some sort of entertainment.

But why I get high off entertainment I don't know. Entertainment is nothing but a guilt trip of self-hate. A masochistic tendency. I'm talking of the audience right now. Maybe I feel guilty for something. The performance, itself, I find exhibiting a false ego-pride or dishonest self-love. This, for the first half of the twentieth century, brought about what was called the superstar. Fine. And this is why entertainment has become so big. But it is fading because of its inherent dishonesty. It is of no

more use. Cultural Poses by Brenda Nielson was either trying to exhibit this idea or was an example of an obsolete performance. I might be able to explain later.

In the sixties all of us lost souls got high on hallucinogens. This helped to create cultural CHANGE. It's significant that in the seventies the drugs that give the rush are the downs (valium, seconal, dalmane, nembutal, etc.) Why? Well, people are trying to forget the old age, to bury it all! Every last remnant of a society from their heads. What society?

The society which is built on Sado-Masochism, that has existed for the last 2,000 or more years. The semiology in the anthropological system which is contained within the collective unconscious of humanity is quite simple: Jesus the Christ hanging on a cross and loving it because his father, Jehovah (:Yahweh) loves it too. The excuse is that it was to save lives. Jehovah the sadist and Jesus the

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## BALLET Y'S

Elinor Galbraith

This is the third program that I have seen by Ballet Ys. Each of the three times I have walked away with the same questions, "What are they doing?" and "Do they ask themselves if what they do has any validity other than in the context of ballet technique?" I have nothing to say 'against the dancers themselves for they seem to be at the mercy of the choreographers. Nothing has been demanded of them, instead they must crawl into starchy balletic choreography. We can't all dance like Baryshnikov so why expect them to try? Why constantly struggling to fit within a technique, in a class, yes, but on stage isn't there something more vital they could be struggling with? Try creating roles for these dancers as individuals. These are young people up there and I want to know more about who they are and how they see themselves as well as how high their extensions are. (Because of this lack I found that in their performance too much energy was concentrated in the face. It was the only area left undirected and they resorted on many occasions to the freedom offered to express themselves. Resulting in the body being disconnected and caught up in counting and anticipation instead of being able to follow the movements through with body and mind a complete unit.)

Fata Morgana I liked this piece parts of the choreography were brilliant, but I've seen these noble sentiments expressed before in her other work with more clarity. Maybe it was just an off night and then perhaps for Anna Blewchamp now, as a choreographer it should be more of a time for clarification of the vision rather than the enlargement upon the same theme. Editing as opposed to proliferation.

A few things about All that wasted Shame. These ideas of frustration, abuse and shame could be dealt with in less stereotyped imagery. Although frustration, abuse and shame are still major issues in our society the images Gail Benn presented us are very superficial and don't mean much anymore. You do not hang yourself when frustrated or being a vamp suffer abuse from gigolos, or if a butterfly reveal your naked body without beautiful wings be ashamed. How do you Gail Benn personally deal with these elements of existence? Society does not need affirmation of what everyone already know. Maybe more constructive views on the subject would be more helpful. In reference to the program notes I hope that the way you see yourself as a woman is far more complex than these three cliché images. In my opinion the issues involved in frustration, abuse and shame are androgynous and not solely the problems of women.

Picnic on the Battlefield was an interesting attempt but my reactions to it were negative. On the whole I found it embarrassing and insulting.

Embarrassed for the dancers and insulted by the fact the choreographer thought that this was worth showing us. Possibly it could have shown the absurdity of war like the original story but instead it became a "little girl" story, coy and trite. May I suggest to the choreographer that she look around more, at today, her own life experiences, maybe she'll find some material more relevant and original. I would like to see something interesting up there, maybe even difficult to understand so I have to ask myself a few questions. I'm a grown-up now and I want more from life than fairytales.

I would like to stress that my intentions in criticizing these pieces are hopefully ones that will cause the choreographers and the artistic directors of Ballet Ys to question their motivations and intentions more. Spend more time on developing new concepts to structure their pieces around and to establish an individual approach to the question of validity as a dance company. An identity other than being the only alternative ballet company in Toronto to the National Ballet. To become truly a ballet of the times.

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masochist. This cultural sign has become so entrenched in our subconscious minds that we (all of us) continually persecute ourselves and others and yet this has existed all the way through the history of western Christendom and no doubt other patriarchal societies as well. God willed his son killed and enjoyed watching him suffer. (Was not the thunder and lightning on Calvary at the time of Christ's death just Jehovah in orgasm.) Jesus also willed himself to suffer. Suffering, itself, has become almost a virtue particularly for the stereotype of an artist/performer. An impact has been left for sure: the martyr, the unknown soldier, self-hate, S & M, chastity, rape, and the first world war as well. Consider also the self-abasement in the semiology of modern art. But this is what he/she is supposed to do because of the "guiding" light of this one sign.

On the other hand, if one forgets what he/she is supposed to do and just does what there is to do, then there is no suffering, no guilt, no self-hate, no sado-masochism nor will of it. Just real time, real space, and real living. This is, I'm sure, what Duchamp and Mondrian were trying to get into. In "Canadian Phenerotic: The saga of Mimi Beck", Mimi and Don did what was real to them at the time. Brenda, on the other hand, seemed to invent an unreal time and space to work out whatever fantasies she had been having in her mind for some times now, I'm sure. In other words, when compared to Brenda's work, there is more reality in Mimi's.

I'm talking here about androgynous art: Mimi and Don each having their separate and equally well-defined wills

throughout the piece which, I'm sure, reflects on their own personal lives as well, I can only hope. I'm saying this sincerely as my own marriage and most others have failed for this and other related issues. The red tape in Mimi's piece is the struggle in all the politics of the passing patriarchal age. Today, we seem to be experiencing, along with the negative, the positive aspects of the transition from a culture of sex stereotypes to one that is androgynous in nature, where differentiation occurs along the lines of individual personality structure and individual potential and will.

The word, "square", as "hip" talk to describe a person of old age consciousness is mysteriously appropriate in this case for the old aeon systems of masonry were based upon the square, and founded upon a concept of male supremacy symbolized by Osiris, Solomon, and other patriarchal figures such as Abram who dethroned the ancient Goddess, the Cycle, and, in her place, enthroned male aggression in the form of Yahweh. The name Abram is appropriate here for it was he, remember, who offered the ram as a burnt offering to his newly found deity just as the sun began to rise in the sign of Aries, the ram. In other words the ram was burning himself and loving it. Masochism, if you think far enough into it. The co-incidence is astonishing. There is consequently a long historical tradition of the so-called inferiority of women in our Judeo-Christian culture.

Yahweh, in the same manner, offered himself in the form of his son. The masochism in this act in no way helped the cause of peace that Christianity preached. The word Amen is a perversion. "So may it be", is bullshit because the ceremony did not work. The mass, itself, had no power for the peace it falsely proclaimed. For the next 2,000 years nothing but war prevailed: the fall of the Roman empire by the aggressors from the north, the crusades, the napoleonic wars, and then the first and second world wars which the anti-Christ himself brought about in order to try and put and end to all the bullshit. The sign, Anti-Christ, manifested itself in two different illusions, Adolf Hitler as one and the Beast 666, Baphomet (Aleister Crowley) as the other. The energy between the poles in the dual nature of this sign worked itself out mysteriously but effectively for those who want to believe. Hitler was the evil patriarch and Crowley taught that former evil was actually good, Hitler excluded, of course. Hitler thought what he was doing was right but, being morally wrong, the world soon caught on. One can no longer exploit another. One no longer should obey rules. Each individual rules himself without need of the politician. This is what the Beast 666 taught. But the Beast rejected disciples unlike Christ.

Crowley brought back the old Draconian and Tantric system known

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## CANADA COUNCIL DANCE PRIORITIES FOR 1978-79 BUDGET RESTRAINTS

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The two principal dance forms — classical and modern, as well as what might loosely be called experimental — will have priority over other forms, given the Council's severe budget restraints, rising operating costs for the companies the Council now supports, the current rate of inflation, and the ever-increasing number of promising young companies that do not at the moment receive Council support.

According to Charles Lussier, director of the Council, this definition of priorities was made necessary by the realization, as grant requests came in from Council-assisted dance companies, that what is at stake is a serious erosion of artistic standards if a level of support to allow for company survival and necessary artistic growth is not maintained. The Council is also anxious to retain enough flexibility in the dance budget to offer support to new companies which in due course are able to meet its criteria of professional and artistic quality.

"Competing for the scarce funds available to dance companies, which have increased dramatically in number over the past five years," said Mr. Lussier, "are dance forms such as jazz, ice-dancing, folk dancing (including Spanish and East Indian), tap dancing and other forms, some of which may enter our purview in the future but which we clearly cannot support at present. Our first responsibility is to those dance forms we have helped sponsor and nurture over the years. It is a truism that these forms almost invariably cost the most and fare the worst as profit-making business enterprises, in spite of good box office performance. We are responsible for their support, however, as long as the work remains excellent in the view of our outside advisors. We shall be able to move into other fields of dance only when budgetary restrictions are eased."

In 1976-77, the Council's grants to 24 dance companies and organizations falling within these guidelines totalled \$3.5 million.

The following is a response to the above policy of the Dance Office of the Canada Council.

The Canada Council Statement on Dance Priorities for 1978-79 affects large and small dance companies, independent performers, the public, government and Canada itself. How does one focus clearly on the implications for all involved, and then see how to proceed? I cannot yet see answers, but found that the statement provoked thoughts and speculations.

Groups now proposed for elimination from public funding are the popular dance forms such as jazz, ice-dancing, folk, tap, etc. All are forms traditionally considered enjoyable, entertaining, and relevant to the amorphous mass called "public". Canada Council is proposing to sponsor and nurture those groups that have proved most expensive, least successful financially, and least popular in the past: the performing arts of modern dance and ballet. Has Canada Council declared that "public taste" is so ignorant and culturally deprived that it needs to have culture rammed down its reluctant throat at public expense?

I ask that question as a modern dancer who believes very much in the performing art forms of dance. I am greatly disturbed by the proposed elimination. I could say with relief—"it's them not us." But we live in times when money is tightening and there are only limited resources for growing numbers of artists. More and more categories may next be eliminated. Who will be next? and next? Who will be last—and then none? Will this policy help stabilize a temporarily difficult situation or are we in the midst of a massive societal decline that will eventually phase out all artists as expensive frivolities?

I am concerned that the policy statement may actually be publicly declaring that modern dance and ballet are expensive frivolities, unprofitable, irrelevant for most of Canada—yet Council will arbitrarily and magnanimously choose to subsidize the most expensive, least profitable, and possibly less popular of the dance forms.

The arts are trapped in a historic perpetual dependency upon prevailing whims of wealthy private patrons and government agencies. Perhaps this is the inevitable situation for artists who are specialists producing nonmaterial goods and services. At best, their work is termed "entertaining", "stimulating", and "educational", but such experiences feed and clothe no one. Can dance ever succeed as a profit making enterprise? How can it? How can we survive if not? All dancers, whether in big or small companies, independent performers, tap, jazz, or folk artists are in the same situation—too often dependent on money giving organizations. Can we become at least partially self-supporting? We need some way to make a living in this occupation which

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photo: Lynn Rotin

"Why did you do it?"

"I love dancing"

cont'd from page 14

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to be continued

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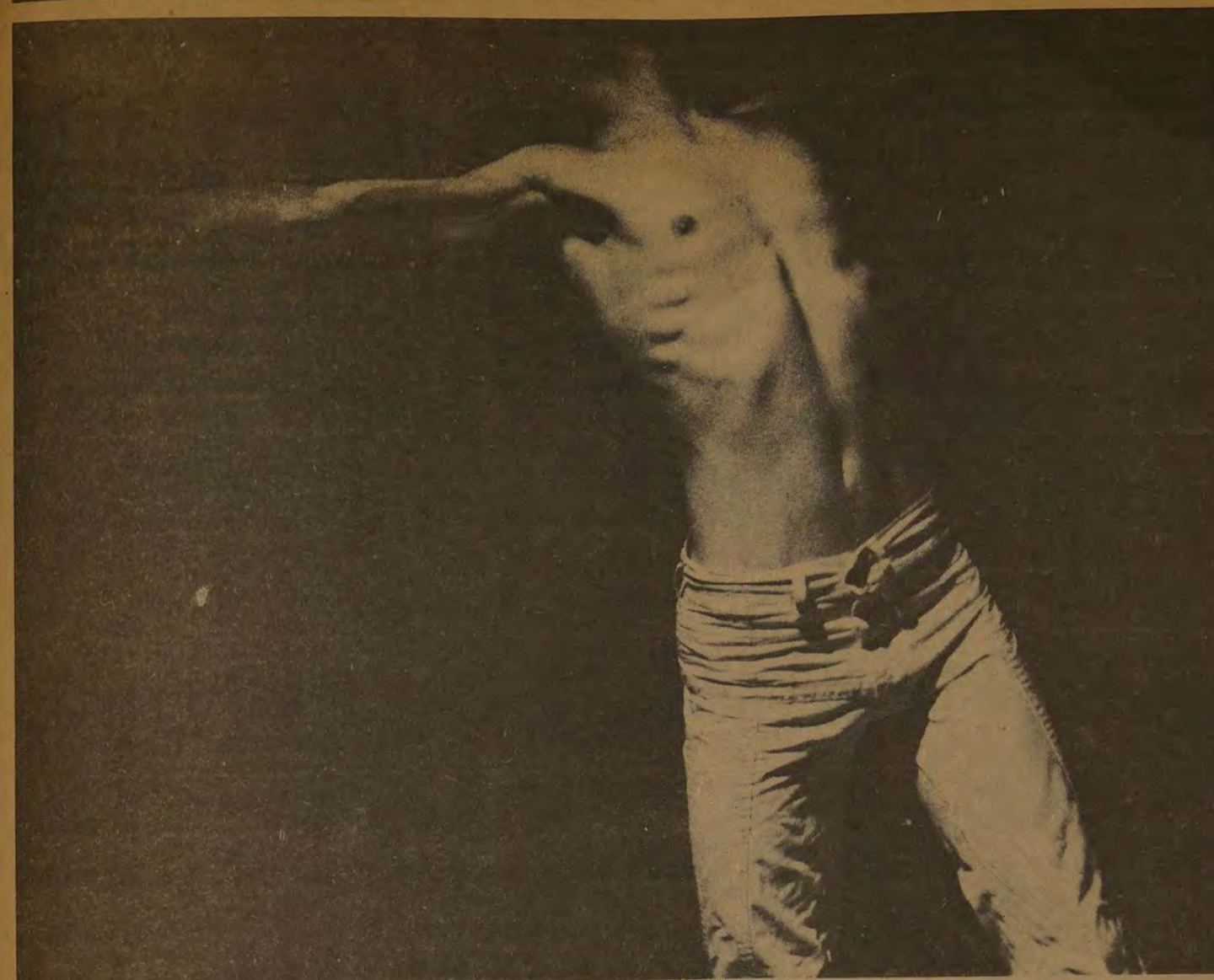
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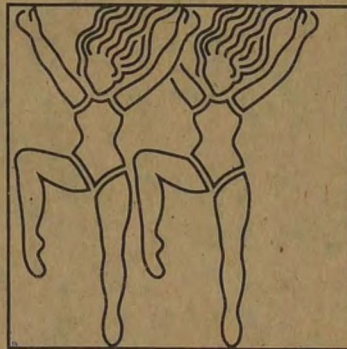
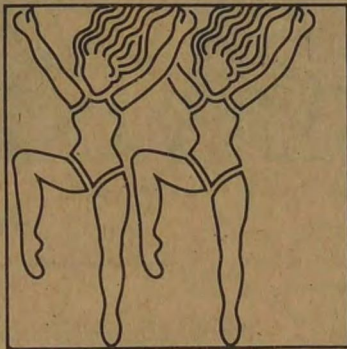
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