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ENTERTAINMENT

Petronio's dance troupe cuts a new

BY GAIL OGDEN

Lincoln Journal Star Reviewer

Stephen Petronio and his company of seven dancers performed for a small, but truly appreciative dance audience Friday evening at the Lied Center for Performing Arts. The New York City-based company, on the cutting edge in modern dance, used contemporary music, movement and ideas to communicate.

The program order was changed and opened with a solo from 1986 performed by Petronio titled "#3." Drawn from photographs of different people and the way they communicate, the piece was a good opening

to the performance. The starkness of the setting and lighting focused attention on the way Petronio explored and communicated through movement.

Performed to music by Lennie Pickett, the sculptural movement centered primarily on the use of the upper torso and arms. Interspersed stillness accented Petronio's precise attention to detail and gave the viewer the opportunity to follow him.

Although he maintained a frontal orientation for much of the piece, Petronio encompassed all of the space through movement or focus, while basically remaining in one

spot. Sudden changes of level, turning his back quickly to face upstage and the slow sensuous, sinuous movement created a feeling of completeness.

Following a lengthy pause, the speed, humor, and musical interpretation Petronio is probably known for were introduced in "MiddleSex Gorge" with riveting music by Wire. The play on words was transposed into movement, delineated sexual identities, boundaries and aspects of both genders.

In a nice reversal of gender costuming, the men wore a "corset" design for the piece in a sort of Madonna reversal. The bare legs of

all the dancers presented circular strength that traditional cover up, letting the audience see that dance is hard work.

Speed of movement was a factor in Petronio's choreography. Pauses were inserted for relief and contrast. This was a choreography of manipulation, of phrases, although some were repeated movements employed hip circles that moved up or down the body, depending where and how he wanted his dancers. Flashing legs, not flashy, slashing arms, followed by sustained shifts the perceptions of

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Speed of movement was a crucial
factor in Petronio's choreography.
Pauses were inserted for visual re-
lief and contrast. This was not the
choreography of manipulated de-
vices and phrases, although there
were repeated movements. Petronio
employed hip circles that undulated
up or down the body, depending on
where and how he wanted to move
his dancers. Flashing legs, though
not flashy, slashing arms, quickness
followed by sustained slowness,
shifted the perceptions of time to

break up what could have easily be-
come monotonous.

"The King is Dead" and "La-
reigne" (long live the queen — pun
intended) concluded the second half
of the performance. Choreographed
and intended to be performed back-
to-back, these two pieces reinforced
the movement inventions and qual-
ities the choreographer favors. Part-
nering took on functional uses of
body weight, different facings in re-
lationship to the audience than what
one might expect and the ever pre-
sent speed. The pauses became
more daring in their length, with ef-
fective overlaid subtle sustained

movement — such as all the dancers
rolling slowly on the floor, or a trio
shifting their focus to an upstage di-
agonal.

The first of these two pieces was
performed to Ravel's "Bolero," with-
out the prologue, and used slides
throughout the piece. I found the
slides distracting and very interest-
ing. They pulled my focus con-
stantly. The costumes had a sort of
partially unwrapped mummy qual-
ity to them that was echoed in the
slides. The choreography remained
contained for the most part, not giv-
ing way to increased frenzy that the
infamous music is known for.