

FOOT NOTES

The New York Baroque Dance Company (Florence Gould Hall, October 7 through 9) is porcelain on the hoof, and quick-moving, precise little hooves they are. The music for Catherine Turocy's *La Danse et Ses Plaisirs*—for violin and harpsichord—was written in 1734. The dance, however, is not a reconstruction but an original work in the baroque style: a study not only in early ballet technique but of a society in which artifice was the hallmark of art and emotion was no less intense for being decoratively contained. In the opening *Allegro*, Diane Epstein and the choreographer appear with hands and arms encased in white gloves which accent their elegance of gesture, their bodies made at once chaste and alluring by panniered gowns. The chassés and sharp, small hopping steps are fast and tricky; symmetrical patterns bespeak an ordered universe, and underneath the reticence and formality of the movement there's an assurance of strength and control. For the slow, gentle *Aria*, Turocy ties on a mask, completing the artificiality of her person, and dances with gentle decorum that disguises a motivating passion. She extends a gloved hand to an invisible partner; then the glove rests gently on her heart, and later it flickers for a moment before a brief, controlled trembling seizes her entire arm. Finally, the other members of the company, who have been posed at the side of the stage as if in a ballroom, come on to participate in a joyous Giga, tracing clear, crisp patterns on the floor as if celebrating the delights of love in a tidy world.—**JOSEPH H. MAZO**

Prowess Dancearts Collective (P.S. 122, October 7 through 10) marked its first anniversary with a concert of works by artistic direc-

be held by others.

There Were So Many . . ., based on a poem by Jones, is an elegy for the departed. Set to John Cage's sternly delicate "Six Melodies for Violin and Keyboard" and to long silences, the piece at first expands on the image of shifting concentric circles. Later, the dancers, wearing white clothes by Linda Pratt and Jean Claude Mastroianni, pose in a series of long symmetrical chains across the space, like Rorschach blots revealing tender dependency—except that toward the end the central figures lick at the invisible dividing line between the halves of the design, and apprentices Josie Coyoc and Morgan Keller open their mouths in silent howls. Gradually, people withdraw from the pattern until only two are left, and one of those is lying down.

The performing was uniformly exceptional. In company apprentice Rosalynde LeBlanc, Jones has found a perfect partner for *Shared Distance*. Moderately tall with skin the same bronze tone as his, strong but gentle, she seems more his knowing equal than the smaller white women (Julie West and Amy Pivar) who used to perform the duet. Latsky and R. Justice Allen were marvelous in the gripping *Justice's Leg*, a monologue-as-duet by Allen, Jones, and Latsky. You can challenge Jones on issues of eclecticism, taste, excess, but never on brains, never on spirit. His response to these difficult times is an outpouring of beauty and community feeling that nourishes him, and us.

I can only imagine how Stephen Petronio makes dances: he has troubling and/or enthralling ideas about sex, oppression, love, disease, death; he gets a bunch of smart bodies bolting around a studio (people to whom he has probably not expounded on these ideas), and by mystical communion and half-conscious selection, the ideas, fragmented, fly onto the bodies of the dancers.



LOIS GREENFIELD

Andrea E. Woods in Bill T. Jones's new . . . *And the Maiden*, October 27 and 29 at the Joyce

Two Guys

By Deborah Jowitt
Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company
At the Joyce Theater
October 19 through 31

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ly grinding his hips (Jones's allusions to liberated sex often—why?—evoke burlesque). But there is gravity and terror in his performance, his body jerking, his face grimacing as electronic viz-

Two Guys

By Deborah Jowitt

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Stephen Petronio Company
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October 12 through 17

We go to performances by the Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company to be entertained, moved, shocked, angered. Lavishly. Jones is like a gracious host-gourmand who doesn't want anyone leaving the table still able to walk. "No more!" I plead silently at some point in his dances, but the excess can reveal new richness. We stagger out of the theater stuffed with gorgeousness, often startled by what we've taken in.

Who but Jones (in his solo *Last Night on Earth*) would mime meticulously, provocatively, every verse of the "Pirate Jenny" song from *Threepenny Opera*, letting it gradually sink in that the song is not only the murderous fantasy of an underdog, but that the "black freighter" leaving a wake of death may be seen as AIDS? Who else would make a duet (*Shared Distance*, 1982) in which a man and a woman show you—abstracted and somewhat condensed—a lifetime of traveling side by side, challenging one another, bearing each other's weight until you feel the burden of their fatigue and their just-once-more jousts settling into your own body? (I love the fact that, except for a few moments, it's more about action than attitude.) *How to Walk an Elephant* (1986) offers vivid allusions

to famous ballets and witty permutations of ballet mechanics like handfuls of salted nuts (Jones and Torrin Cummings turn Odile Reine-Adelaide by holding her shaven head, then go off absorbed in each other, holding hands in skaters' waltz position).

The company has acquired Mollissa Fenley's *Esperanto* (1985), itself a study of excess and rigor locking horns. Set to an earthquake of a score by Ryuchi Sakamoto, it offers the company's marvelous women—Heidi Latsky, Reine-Adelaide, Maya Saffrin, and Andrea Woods, plus Fenley as guest artist or Arthur Aviles—in demanding, repetitive patterns that skein over the stage in elusive geometry. Rarely fully unified in space and time, the women resemble so many Joans of Arc tracking through private battlefields. I saw it with Fenley and liked the women-warrior look; Aviles in her role would, I'd think, skew the meaning: the prudently disguised hero fallen among amazons.

Aviles is featured in an uneven new solo by Jones, *Achilles Loved Patroclus*—a tribute to men who love men with death all around them. The parallel between the Trojan War and today's battleground with its unsung heroes and enraged mourning is apt. Aviles enters a landscape of broken columns (stunningly lit by Robert Wierzel) inching along on his back. Liz Prince has dressed him in silvery white reminiscent of antique armor. Amid crashes of music (by John Oswald), a British voice recites from the *Iliad*. Even posing among the columns, the superb Aviles is more a Pan figure than the classic warrior—startling into great, resilient jumps, gleeful

ly grinding his hips (Jones's allusions to liberated sex often—why?—evoke burlesque). But there is gravity and terror in his performance, his body jerking, his face grimacing as electronic wizardry collages the epic's horrifying descriptions of battle into a storm of flying limbs, ripped bodies, fountains of blood.

Jones's two new group works are relatively succinct. *War Between the States* is set to two Charles Ives quartets, performed live by the Diaspora Players. Although the dance is a formal one, muted images from the Civil War twist up from the vigorous dancing the way old tunes poke out of Ives's beautifully jangling music. Silhouetted against the backdrop, Larry Goldhuber, Daniel Russell, and Jeffery McLamb huddle, boys plotting mischief, but the next image is of the whole company—wearing filmy red, white, and blue concoctions by Isaac Mizrahi—drawn up in diagonal ranks. Eric Geiger, Aviles, Reine-Adelaide, and Cummings dance in a tight unison phalanx like a scouting party. The ensemble poses and gestures on the floor suggest weary wounded. Right at the end, as the dancers swarm about the stage, Goldhuber paces pensively, a leader plotting strategies.

But there are more intimate glimpses of human behavior: in an adagio section, Reine-Adelaide tosses her long legs elegantly yet extravagantly, while Woods stands nearby, first making prim gestures, then dancing more impudently. A duet for Jones and Saffrin is tender, polite, almost careful; they nearly kiss. Then she all but wheelbarrows him off and disappears herself, leaving him to

moment before a brief, controlled trembling seizes her entire arm. Finally, the other members of the company, who have been posed at the side of the stage as if in a ballroom, come on to participate in a joyous Giga, tracing clear, crisp patterns on the floor as if celebrating the delights of love in a tidy world.—JOSEPH H. MAZO

I can only imagine how Stephen Petronio makes dances: he has troubling and/or enthralling ideas about sex, oppression, love, disease, death; he gets a bunch of smart bodies bolting around a studio (people to whom he has probably not expounded on these ideas), and by mystical communion and half-conscious selection, the ideas, fragmented, fly onto the bodies of the dancers, spray into the atmosphere along with the beads of sweat, and, with luck, reassemble themselves in some part of our brains.

Petronio produces brilliant and powerful movement, but he tempts us to locate meanings that often lurk just out of reach. Of course, we can relax and let the thrashing arms, the twisting jumps, the leaps that change shape in the air, the phrases that sputter in and out of unison please us on a purely sensual level (as a feature writer for *The Sunday Times* of London put it, "Petronio gives good body"), but the choreographer, I think, wants more of his audiences. And accompanying sets, costumes, and music often press us to think politics.

I'm grateful in Petronio's powerful *Full Half Wrong* (an avatar of 1992's *Half Wrong plus Laytext*) for his more deliberate allusions to the Stravinsky/Nijinsky *Sacre du Printemps*, bits of whose score (along with stuff compiled by Mitchell Lager) accompany the piece. The dim-lit opening with nearly naked Rebecca Hilton as a potent yet awkward elemental female seems to limn the dawn of sexuality (or an art idea of it). A pulled-out unison section on the floor for the company's four strong women—Kristen Borg, Hilton, Mia Lawrence, and Rebekah Trower—splendidly allies the convention of the woman's chorus with a slow dream-memo-

moment before a brief, controlled trembling seizes her entire arm. Finally, the other members of the company, who have been posed at the side of the stage as if in a ballroom, come on to participate in a joyous Giga, tracing clear, crisp patterns on the floor as if celebrating the delights of love in a tidy world.—JOSEPH H. MAZO

Prowess Dancearts Collective (P.S. 122, October 7 through 10) marked its first anniversary with a concert of works by artistic director Christina Jones (longtime member of Urban Bush Women) and seven other women artists of

Dance

African, African American, Caribbean, and Filipino background. On the whole, the program, "Her-story: Women Tongue," was too tentative and indirect. Despite moments of handsome dancing, some lovely costuming, and tastes of delectable music, too many pieces ended up in the air, gone nowhere fast. In *Monologue*, dancer-choreographer Thea Martinez says, "Let the mambo tell the story; let the mambo show the attitude." As the audience greeted the vague, sudden ending of each dance with shrieks of pleasure, I kept waiting for Prowess's mambo to be as tight as Martinez's jeans, sharp enough to get me home.

Then came Cynthia Oliver's solo, *Elisa*, an exuberant tribute to sacred/profane women of African blood—anyone we have ever known or imagined. Oliver, a New Yorker with roots in the Virgin Islands, was quick and fearless, pushing her body to the limits—legs splayed, feet flexed, fingers taut, performing sleight of hand. She channeled voices. "You eatin' enough? You so t'in! You no get a man?" "I'd rather be a lamppost in

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JOWITT

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ry of violent sex, reenacted without a partner.

In *Full Half Wrong*, the intertwined nature of desire and danger bubble out of the movement much of the time, but the message is spelled out for us by text unfurling in red lights on the black backdrop (like a commercial message above Times Square or a Jenny Holzer piece). The words (by Henry Miller, William Burroughs, et al.) start out grandiose, talking about the "copulating rhythm of the universe" and "huge thighs opening to us like the night" and become increasingly erotic. The advice that "men have Venus envy" may help us to see soloing Lawrence as a potent Venus, but the words distract our eyes from the dancing's message, even as they drive it home.

The decor for *The King Is Dead (Part I)* is more enticing and slightly less distracting, partly because Cindy Sherman's extraordinary shifting photographs loom over the dance like portraits in a parlor from hell. Or temple icons. The two screens show darkly luminous framed images of a half-wrapped head with howling mouth, of a penile shape that turns out to be bound hands pointed in prayer, of giant eyes, of mask-faces that, through dissolves, seem to revolve eerily from profile to full-face to profile. Ken Tabachnick's lighting picks out figures in pale costumes (by Manolo) that suggest mummy wrappings, and at one point Petronio appears, ghostly in a bodysuit painted with his innards and a bloody spot.

AIDS may be the specter here,

but the dancing—stiffly wheeling arms, legs yanking the body every which way—looks more enraged than debilitated, and it too hymns passion. Three women dance slow and hippy, like primal nymphs, angular yet soft. Movement ironically stalls while Ravel's *Bolero* rolls to its orgiastic heights. Everyone (the men are Gerald Casel, Ori Flomin, and Gordon White) lies and rolls stiffly while Petronio writhes. At the end, people slowly lower others to the floor.

I wonder if Petronio is afraid of losing subtlety and/or dance power if he allows his ideas to mold his choreography more consciously. With a piece like *She Says*, set to Yoko Ono's high little voice, thudding rhythms, and loud sentiments, he displays the strength of his dancers in voluptuous and impudent movement. Yet he casts himself as an apparition in a stocking mask, scooting through like a hijacker who can't get on with the job. And I don't think he's meant to be just a postmodern ornament either. ■

FOOTNOTES

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New York than the mayor of Norfolk!" A woman containing multitudes, her smooth physical comedy charms. At the next moment, her shimmering, mystical calm—has this almond-eyed beauty been peeled off the wall of an Egyptian temple?—takes the breath away. More prowess to her!

—EVA YAA ASANTEWAA

Art Bridgman and Myrna Packer, a husband-wife team whose dancing used to look like an image of perfect harmony—they seemed two parts of one thing—

now want to tell us about disharmony. **The Bare-Bones Circus** (Dance Theater Workshop, October 7 through 10) is a circus of sorts. It has oompah music and a clown act and a horse act and so on, all ingeniously adapted to DTW's little stage. But what it really is is a hallucination on the theme of unmeetable demands.

The demands are the woman's. The piece begins with Packer whispering hotly, "I want more, I want bigger, I want faster." Later, it's she who is the whip-cracking ringmaster, she who, with one breast bared, is the strongest man on earth. Bridgman gets the schlepier roles: the clown, the horse. She likes him when he's a horse—a horse is big, right?—and they dance a sweeping pas de deux. But soon she's telling him everything he did wrong, and when, to his apparent relief, she exits, he tells us everything we do wrong: we want the wrong kind of show, we laugh in the wrong places, etcetera. I wish the audience-abuse had been left out—it's so corny—but the show was still memorable, because of Bridgman and Packer's gift for intimacy. They seem to have known each other from before they were born, and whatever they do together seems like something that actually happens between couples. Before, what happened was nice. Now it's not nice, but it never peters out into some sort of general gripe. It's always I-and-Thou, and this keeps it modest and real. —JOAN ACOCCELLA

Donna Rizzo and Andrew Krichels, who direct the **Tennessee Dance Theatre** and supply all its choreography, have roots in the South. For practical and aesthetic reasons, no doubt, they try to give

their work an indigenous flavor, drawing inspiration from writers like Flannery O'Connor, Tennessee Williams, and Eudora Welty, and from equally potent anonymous communal art—namely quilting. The dances they offered at Symphony Space October 16 and 17, however, only glance at the rigorous formal values and the celebration of life's basic, continuing elements that fine quilts display so gloriously. Similarly, the gothic passions and personal or local eccentricities immortalized in the literature—and there only as part of more universal truths—are reduced in the choreography to banal folkloric anecdote.

Though they and their colleagues put on a professional-looking show, Rizzo and Krichels produce work that is naive on more significant counts. It employs a mix of the dance techniques the choreographers have absorbed in their long and wide experience as performers without ever achieving a unique and meaningful vocabulary. Its structure is elementary, heavily reliant on strings of loosely associated vignettes. Its unforgivable flaw, though, is serving up sentiment (often kitsch sentiment) that narcotizes the mind and heart in place of the raw, deep emotion that quickens it. One piece, *Dinner Dance*, which attempts disastrously to be funny, strays far from its geographic mark, borrowing strategies from the European Dadaists. Perhaps it's inevitable that this comic piece should fail; one cannot be truly funny without a firm sense of tragedy.

—TOBI TOBIAS

One of the pleasures of **Emma Diamond's** *Six Metamorphoses*

(Cunningham Studio, October 7 through 9) was the ease with which it pulled its bright little character studies out of the abstract shapes of Cunningham technique. Working with fellow Cunningham dancers and assorted other virtuosi, Diamond fashioned a set of brief solos on mythological themes that, in the simplicity of their dramatic conception and the perfection of their technical finish (the clarity and scale of the Cunningham method, its deftness of attack), radiated the vividness and charm of watercolor.

As Niobe, transformed into a mountain out of grief for her murdered children, China Laudio struck the work's only somber note, a muted, eloquently reticent portrait painted as much in masses as in movement, concentrating its image of loss in two limply swinging arms. Diamond finished the piece as Arethusa, one of Ovid's amorously pursued nymphs, rippling across the stage from pose to modest, maidenish pose, more light and delicate even than the dress that rippled along with her. Diamond is slim above the waist, solid and strong through her thighs and ankles, a tension put to especially good use by the strenuous explorations—one focusing on the legs, one on the upper body—that opened *Errant Maneuvers*. The work's second half, in which an ensemble of five developed the solo material, included some interesting passages but often seemed aimless. *Oscillations*, for the same group, was more coherent, its premise—a party of bathers—generating images that mingled the aquatic with the communal.

—BILL DERESIEWICZ

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