

BACK STAGE

THE PERFORMING ARTS WEEKLY

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Price: **\$2.95** (NY, NJ, CT, PA)
\$3.25 (Elsewhere)



Dancer-choreographer Amy Marshall.

Amy Marshall Dance Company

Reviewed by Lisa Jo Sagolla

Self-presented in association with Joyce SoHo at Joyce SoHo, 155 Mercer St., NYC, Sept. 26-29.

Amy Marshall is a smart choreographer. She sets out tricky choreographic challenges for herself and meets them with great fun and intelligence. Her works sparkle and are devoid of the edginess that darkens much of the downtown dance scene these days.

The polished evening of Marshall's dances, performed by her company at Joyce SoHo, was the kind of production that would prompt audiences of all ages to acquire a taste for modern dance. The septet, "Quercus," feels like a playground of

sounds and movements. With funky leaps, shoulder rolls, grinding pelvises, and frog-like squats, the dancers amusingly capture the quirkiness of the music—a score made by whistles, triangles, drums, ratchets, and rattles. As the cool, slick moves of "Askew" are placed squarely on every beat of its spare yet driving score, we feel every tweak, twonk, and squawk of the music. We can "see" violin bows speedily screeching across strings as the dancers lunge, extend, and flick their wrists.

Marshall lets an Arabian-flavored song set the style for her solo, "Leyli." Costumed as a belly dancer, she interprets the music's slow opening phrases with seductive Middle-Eastern-style movements that suddenly explode and develop into big, fast choreography that devours the space with astonishing power.

The complex group piece, "Mercury in Retrograde," is full of surprises and understated sexuality. In an impressive acrobatic romp, dancers **Chad Levy** and **Jared**

Hanamaikai can't decide if they want to be Moiseyev or Martha Graham, but the stylistic mix proves delectable. A passive *pas de deux* quietly turns red hot and segues into an orgy of ensemble patternings that ends before getting out of control. Sex in Marshall's choreography is a delicious secret, kept in check.

Completing the program, "Two Duets and a Quartet" showcased Marshall's choreographic ingenuity. The two duets—one sassy, one elegant—are so completely dissimilar that one can't imagine how they will combine into a culminating quartet. Not only does Marshall invent a bouncy, courtly vocabulary that successfully blends the duets' opposing personalities, but when the couples then simultaneously reprise their original moves, it all feels perfectly harmonious.

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