

Review

Amy Marshall Dance Company
 エイミー・マーシャル・
 ダンス・カンパニー

Performed at The Puffin Room
 Reviewed on 5/15/03 by TERRY O'NEILL
 Translated by Atsuko Ono

Dance

A Lively Cast of Characters

If you think modern dance is less "accessible" than the pageantry of classical ballet, take the kids to an Amy Marshall Dance Company show. AMDC's recent show at Soho's Puffin Room showed that modern dance can be fun for people of all ages, as shown by the enthusiastic reaction of the many children in the audience.

In *Gustav's Wedding*, a lively cast of characters frolics and agonizes before going through the titular wedding. We meet the wavering couple who eventually get over their cold feet, the jocular rabbi, the buffoonish uncle, the mother of the bride, the slutty bridesmaid, and the groom's kid sister. Abstracted family tensions and conflicts play out, at times ridiculous, at times mournful. In places the piece is yearning and tender—in a repeating motif like a dream ritual, the characters dance in pairs in the shadows but never touch—in others it is broadly comic and full of energy, as in the wild finale when the wedding has been accomplished. All the characters dance with vigor, and the music, arranged by the klezmer group Shirim, adds to the fun.

Vertigo, a solo for Angela Fleddermann, is the weakest piece of the program. The statuesque Fleddermann's background in sports acrobatics would be a temptation to any choreographer, but *Vertigo*, essentially a series of acrobatic tricks, isn't spectacular enough to stand alone, à la Pilobolus. To eastern-flavored techno music by Rajendra Prassanna, Fleddermann gradually unfolds herself from the floor. She is not a very expressive performer, and so her struggles to stand do not lend the choreography much dramatic heft; the movement is essentially balletic, interlaced with backwalkovers, knee turns, cartwheels, etc. The audience responded enthusiastically to the physical feats, but overall this piece was by far the least intriguing of the evening.

Marshall moves into more interesting territory with *Askew*, a percussive, conflict-driven piece. The company, in black trunks and bras, warily faces off against each other and turns against anyone that breaks away from the group. The dancers perform with aggressive verve, but the symmetrical choreography fails to surprise after a while. The thrill when Amanda Schiller launches herself like a projectile and is caught by Chad Levy is somewhat marred when, classical ballet style, he immediately does the trick again



Phoebe Miller, Chad Levy, Amanda Schiller, Michael Kerns, Amy Marshall, Janelle Monaghan, and Angela Fleddermann in *Askew* Photo: Wendell Maruyama

with Phoebe Miller. A nice moment occurs when Levy and Schiller end up eye to eye, freeze, then turn and walk away from each other. It's a welcome dynamic change in a piece that has promise but too little variety.

The evening's closer, *Sentido de Mujer* ("Sense of a Woman"), was the most developed of the evening, a Spanish-flavored riff on gender relations. Schiller, who also stood out in *Askew*, was a knockout here as a shy girl who discovers her power over men and becomes a sassy, joyous flirt. The wonderful costumes, black and red with high-slit skirts and heels, enhance the mood of playful sexuality. Only at the end does the piece falter, as the gender wars turn hostile. Still, *Sentido de Mujer* was the best piece of the night and full of wonderful moments, as when Schiller endearingly trips over her own feet while checking out the men parading past.

The Puffin Foundation's mission statement of "...continuing the dialogue between art and the lives of ordinary people" suits AMDC, but unfortunately Marshall's big, rangy choreography and long-limbed dancers are ill-suited to the tiny Puffin Room space. It was difficult to take in the patterns formed by all the running, leaping, and flying legs when sitting only a few feet away. In a

larger space, I would have liked to see Marshall ratchet up the speed and energy overall. Her (David) Parsons-inflected choreography often feels overly regular and repetitive, and her dancers are clearly capable of following her wherever she decides to take them. This company is full of energy and potential, and I look forward to witnessing its development.

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| Artistic excellence? | ★★★ | 芸術性 |
| Was it entertaining? | ★★★★ | 娯楽性 |
| Was it inventive? | ★★ | 斬新さ |
| Was it healing? | ★★★ | 癒し度 |