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Dance

"...Our Mozart of Modern dance"
Washington Post

"Once the brilliant bad boy of modern dance, Mark Morris has morphed into a latter-day Balanchine. The choreography is cleaner, the bodies are leaner, and he's even shed those famous wild locks."

New York Magazine

Hailed by the *Washington Post* as "our Mozart of Modern dance," Mark Morris and his company have been reinventing the genre for almost 25 years. Known for his overt musicality, Morris is credited with bringing to modern dance the enticing dynamic that the late George Balanchine brought to American ballet. The world-renowned Mark Morris Dance Group is noted for marrying dance to music and infusing both with raw human effort and emotion.

Like Mozart, Morris has proven to be both an incredibly prolific artist and an outspoken rabble-rouser. But it is his musicality that truly cinches the comparison. He began making dances based on music at a time when choreographers of his generation disdained it. His dancers play the role of the orchestra, mimicking the groupings of voices and instruments -- solo for solo, group for group. This intense relationship with music has spawned easy and fruitful comparisons. But he does not abstract the body into musical notation as Balanchine did -- rather, Morris makes music the center of a very human universe.

Morris' combined preferences for Baroque music and vocal music represent a systematized humanity onstage. The formality of baroque music stands for the ever-present order of things, while the vocalizations stand for the "things" themselves -- blood, guts, and viscera transcendent through song. Song becomes dance and vice versa, one revealing the other. He beautifully lumps together the pop, the baroque, the formal and the folk to enact the stuff of life and the arduous effort that stuff requires.

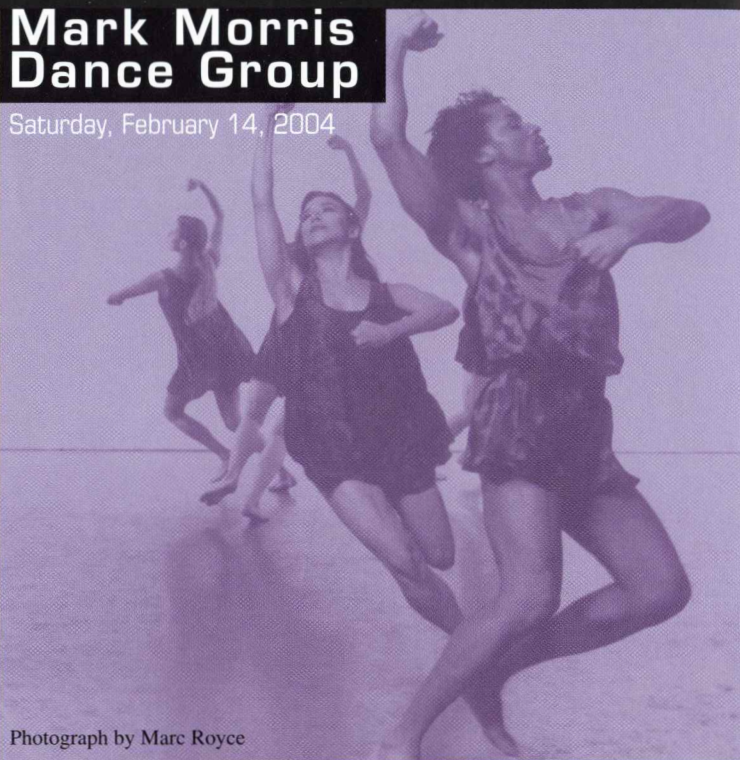
Indeed, Morris' love for the "stuff of life" makes his music-based choreography especially accessible. His movements come from the center, from the earth, not from some Platonic ideal of line. His group dances somehow evoke Breughel's peasants or Picasso's gallumphing, pre-Cubist women. His dancers show weight, even heft, and most importantly, effort. He often creates dance phrases with the intention of revealing the human effort they take. Morris loves the heavy thud of flesh on the floor, the struggle of the kinetic attempt.

Morris' sense of the joyously earthbound presumably comes from his early dance training in Balkan and Flamenco dance; both are traditionally concerned with the assertive rhythm of the foot pounding the floor and both are performed by communities of ordinary people. True to his roots, Morris maintains a company of "folks." They come in many shapes, sizes and colors, and most are older than 30. His dancers are beautiful and decidedly not balletic.

The joyous openness of his dances and the outward-facing openness of his personality, pervade his life. Morris is a natural public figure, but not necessarily an easy one. He is outspoken and completely passionate about artistic issues. He yelled out loud at a performance of Twyla Tharp's *Nine Sinatra Songs*, bemoaning the treatment of women on the stage. He also called Anne Teresa de Keersmaecker "Anne Teresa de Tearjerker" to the press. And the public loved him for it. These outcries reveal his intolerance for dance that he feels doesn't think. His raucous persona also echoes the familial, community feeling of his dances. He acts locally, drinking to the cause of his art and imposing his wild-haired, corpulent figure on the willowy fence sitters that populate the dance world.

Mark Morris Dance Group

Saturday, February 14, 2004



Photograph by Marc Royce

"The diversity of Mark Morris is a legend. But where he gets it all we'll never really know. In him a gift of provenance and a gift of expression are indistinguishable. All we can say is that he's a true dance artist."

Arlene Croce,
The New Yorker





Photograph by Marc Royce

Program

GRAND DUO

"A fierce energy eats up space in a frenzied momentum which culminates in a transcendent moment of power. Astonishing stuff." - *The Times* (U.K.)

"The movement in *Grand Duo*, set to Lou Harrison's score, looks as if it's been hewn from stone. The build-up of tension is terrifying, its release leaves you shaking." - *The Guardian* (U.K.)

14 dancers
Violin; Piano

Music by Lou Harrison (Grand Duo for Violin & Piano)

Prelude
Stampede
A Round
Polka

Lighting by Michael Chybowski

Costumes by Susan Ruddie

Premiered on April 29, 1993 at the Brooklyn Academy of Music, Brooklyn, New York

GOING AWAY PARTY

"Morris's genius is that he recognizes no hierarchical distinction between low and high art. He can tap into the stylistic formality of the one as easily as the direct emotional appeal of the other." - *The Times* (UK)
7 dancers

Music by Bob Wills and His Texas Playboys

Playboy Theme
Yearning
My Shoes Keep Walking Back to You
Goin' Away Party
Baby, That Sure Would Go Good
Milk Cow Blues
Crippled Turkey
When You Leave Amarillo, Turn Out the Lights

Lighting by Michael Chybowski

Costumes by Christine Van Loon

Premiere by April 14, 1990 at Halles de Schaerbeek, Brussels, Belgium

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