

The world of the **Mark Morris Dance Group** is slightly more subdued than Driver's or Fenley's — that means it isn't hyperventilating every second — and infused with a gentle humor. In Morris's *Dad's Charts*, one of five dances presented November 28 and 29 at the Cunningham Studio, Morris schlumps out in a baggy overcoat and hat, promptly shucking them so he can shamble around like a rag doll. The music, by Harry Partch, apes the corny organ tunes popular at county fair talent shows, and agrees with Morris's slightly goofy gait. *Dad's Charts* throws together some pretty disparate stuff — skittish, brisk circles and leaps, a takeoff on the Charleston — and not all of it is comic. There's one part where Morris curls up, fetal, then bounces up from the floor, punching like a boxer; the dance concludes with a disturbing image: Morris spinning himself on the floor in spasmodic circles. That jangling chord, that wrench, characterizes Morris's work. *Brummagem* abducts body positions and gestures from ballet, and assigns them a low-slung weight, making pirouettes clumsy and a little drunken-looking. *Brummagem* also has women catching and lifting each other (which must have Petipa spinning in his grave); their leaps are as exaggerated as a child's. *Zenska* is full of angular, off-centered circles and spins. In *Barstow*, a sort of poem-dance set to words written on a bridge by eight anonymous hitchhikers, each dancer becomes a visual chorus for the next: The second hitchhiker's solo is mimicked or abstracted by the first, and as each performs his solo, the crowd in the background gradually overshadows the new dancer, the way layers of graffiti obscure new scrawls. Morris's dance is intelligent and eye-catching; it's fun identifying a gesture's source and anticipating the kicker. He is himself wonderful to watch: He has a sleek, elastic body, and carries himself with a collie's light, humorous swagger.

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