

Dancemagazine

SALLY BANES

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The **Mark Morris Dance Group** (Morris, Ruth Davidson, Tina Fehlandt, Penny Hutchison, Harry Laird, Elvira Psinas, Nora Reynolds, Jennifer Thienes, Douglas Varone, Teri Weksler, and Holly Williams) performed four dances by Morris at DTW's Bessie Schönberg Theater December 12 and 13. Morris's dances are powered by equally strong senses of musicality and community. They remind one of folk dances with their clear, simple, repeating steps, their strong rhythmic structures, their impressions of a dynamic social order—these are not like the prettified folk dances one sees fixed up for the stage, but like the living dances, full of meaning, that truly belong to a community. Yet the design of Morris's dances also reflects a strong personal vision.

I Love You Dearly, a solo danced by Reynolds to traditional Rumanian songs, concisely develops three movement themes in a bold valentine of a dance that presents and celebrates the dancing self. *10 Suggestions*, a solo for Morris to piano music by Alexander Tcherepnin, played by Paul Epstein, combines the joyous wit of *I Love You Dearly* with delicacy and theatrical satire to evoke the aesthetic dancing of the turn of the century. Angelic in pink silk pajamas, Morris moves from

one prop to another, creating momentary images as he gestures in perfect time to the musical miniatures—posing on a blue chair, wafting a yellow ribbon, skipping while holding a hula hoop aloft, tossing off a little softshoe. *Castor and Pollux* (to music by Harry Partch) and *Gloria* (to Vivaldi) are group dances whose sequencing and subject matter deepen the sense of folk dance into ritual. The first is a warrior's dance, a standoff between two men embedded in circles and criss-crossing phrases stamped out to complex rhythms by eight dancers. The women as well as the men here seem like giants—strong, direct, powerful. The twist of the torso, the brief black costumes, the linking grapevine steps all make this scene look as though it came to life from an archaic fresco. *Gloria* is a more ornate, serpentine ritual, a series of groupings and crossings of space that sweeps through curves and layers, the dancers moving through postures and gestures of humility, grandeur, faith, and hope. Its scale is ambitious; it made the intimate space at DTW full to bursting.