

Young composers, choreographers show their stuff

Last night's American Dance Festival performance provided a rare glimpse into both the direction of modern dance and the propensities of American youth — as described by participants in the festival's Young Choreographers and Composers in Residence Program.

Spending five weeks together at Duke within a pressurized atmosphere both professional and performance-oriented, the artists emerge with expressedly personal statements in their premiere pieces. Yet while each of the three works featured last night used a diverse array of elements in composing their statements, the sentences read the same: modern dance is virtually exploding in a celebration of energy, form and movement.

A Review

As for our youth, fueled on a carbohydrate high of fast food, born and raised on fast forward and slow motion at the push of a button — they are a hurried lot, precise and fervent. They live an hour in a minute, filling each second with a feast for all the senses. Perhaps most importantly, they crave — demand — their individuality, seizing it with a self-righteousness that their seniors may recall more often than they practice it. One of the hallmarks of modern dance at its earliest, this individuality burns hot in the newest generation of artists. Its future is assured.

So does that of Pooh Kaye, whose company, "Eccentric Motions," performed "Wild-Fields" to a composition by Michael Kosch. Decidedly organic in motion and reminiscent in spirit of perennial favorite Pilobolus, the piece is as much electric as the company may be eccentric. Led by the superb body control and enthusiasm of dancer Ginger Gil-

of exotic creatures, dancers roll and slither, leap and scatter across the stage. They seem to delight in their efforts, which consume both the days and nights in these wild fields. Kosch's musical composition, itself an indefatigable collection of seemingly haphazard notes, lends spontaneity to the environment, a random quality that matches the unpredictability of creatures at work and play.

"Climbing the Waltz," a collaboration between Stephanie Skura and composer Frank McCarty, opened with a remarkable sense of the unpredictable, toying with our expectations and our senses as the curtain was raised and lowered, the lights shut off then turned on, the performers entering and exiting when all things orderly suggested otherwise. Stridently surreal, the piece used all corners of Reynolds Theater. Random musings about the nature of dance, relationships and humor provided a backdrop for seemingly random ensemble and solo movements. If the movement was something less than dance, the music was more or less sound, a comedic series of false starts, a cacophony recalling several eras, as musicians too roamed the stage at will. Our curiosity was thoroughly peaked but by mid-piece, confusion took over. Like a joke whose punchline is anti-climatic, the early premise of "Waltz" was never fully realized.

The night's most ambitious work, considering the sheer size of its company, was by the 20-member Mark Morris Dance Group in collaboration with composer Herschel Garfein. In "Forty Arms, Twenty Necks, One Wreathing," Morris' reported choreographic obsession these days with structure was obvious — sometimes painfully. One of the few artists whose reputation precedes him within this new generation, Morris has been described as energetic, even flip-pant. While his new work was sculptural and elegant with its emphasis on synchronized posturing, energetic and flippant it wasn't. Instead, this dance seemed to move by numbers to variegated instrumentation at

times atonal, at times restful. The work cries for greater contrast in movement and pace, but I suspect Morris will be back again to show his range.

Today's 8 p.m. performance is the last chance to view this year's new generation of choreographers and composers at the American Dance Festival. Ten years from now you can say you knew them when ...

— SUSAN WENZEL