

4 October 1984

---

 THE PLACE
 

---

Mary Clarke

---

 Mark Morris
 

---

DANCE UMBRELLA '84 is off to a vigorous start with the programme being given at The Place (until Friday only, alas) by Mark Morris and Dancers from New York. His dancers are Penny Hutchinson and Guillermo Resto and the trio are all brilliant, although Mark Morris, who has choreographed all the pieces being given, is the most vivid and exciting of them all.

His dance style is very powerful and very fast and his timing fantastic. He goes from a moment of quiet, as if gathering strength for the next burst of energy, into frenetic runs and spins and circles, the dance creating its own momentum. He is strongly built but very supple, and his body and arms swing as easily into Tahitian-type exotic slow movement as they drive him into the angry explosions of the final dance, the Louvin Brothers singing The Great Atomic Power.

The surprise of the evening is the amount of comedy as well as of energy it contains. To see Mark Morris and Guillermo Resto in black tights and loose white smocks dancing Love, You Have Won, to Vivaldi is a joyous experience. They dance in unison or against each other in a wild parody of historical dance steps and operatic gestures, all beautifully judged and varied, the elements of surprise being sustained throughout the dance so that right until the end they were winning little gasps of pleasure from an ecstatic audience.

Penny Hutchinson, lithe and cool, has an enchanting little set of pieces called Bijoux to Satie music and in Slugfest, danced in silence, does splendid battle with Resto, his brawn and muscle are no match for her casual strength and after the cunningly contrived grapplings, throws and falls, the couple end up simply slapping each other's heads in the darkness as the end of the dance.

Morris is on his own for two songs by Robert White: The Vacant Chair, which he dances with a paper bag over his head, and The End of a Perfect Day which includes a heavy-footed slog around backstage.

The final Songs That Tell a Story, the Louvin Brothers numbers, brings on all three dancers in jeans and is a lively commentary on the songs, especially Robe of White. The final Atomic Power number is short, but suggests that Mark Morris could, if he wanted, create a great protest dance, the kind that artists like Doris Humphrey and Hanya Holm were making in the 1930s and the kind too seldom attempted today.