

Morris's movements: witty, not all original

AFTER ALL the hype and the gasping and fainting and exclamations about the advent of a new dance god, Mark Morris is here.

The 28-year-old modern-dance choreographer, who has been

DANCE

By SHARON BASCO

Mark Morris and his dancers perform at the Boston Shakespeare Theater through tonight.

hailed as the savior of our post-modern period, brought six dancers and six dances to the Boston Shakespeare Theater last night.

It would have been too much to ask him to live up to his advance billing. To do that, he would have had to part the waters of the

Charles and then walk back across its surface.

But he offered a concert of inventive — if not entirely original — movement. His dances are witty, straightforward and energetic in the life-embracing style of Paul Taylor and the casual-cum-razzmatazz of Twyla Tharp.

Morris appreciates all sorts of music, and delivers gleeful and intelligent commentary on popular Thai songs as well as soulful Satie melodies. The sedate music of Henry Cowell and Antonio Vivaldi set Morris's dancers flying, as did contemporary God-and-country tunes, with lyrics such as: "Read God's book, don't overlook insurance on your soul."

If there is one characteristic shared by the half-dozen works

shown here, it is a willingness to let the score, and even the lyrics of songs, design the dance.

In "Celestial Greetings," Morris creates a homage to the flow and wailing quality of the Thai music. Seamless communal movement splashes back and forth across the stage.

Part of what makes the country-music piece, "Songs that Tell a Story," run are Tharpian shoulder shimmies, flat-footed runs and a see-saw between teeth-gnashing frenzy and slow-motion dreaminess.

"The Vacant Chair" may be Morris's satire of a laughably earnest graduation recital at a conservatory. The choreographer wears nothing but underpants for three short solos, in which he per-



Modern-dance choreographer Mark Morris

sonifies a tree (his limbs askew, his hands cradling "leaves" artlessly devised by the tearing and crumbling of a paper bag) and serves drippy visual accompaniment to melodramatic tenor solos.

"Prelude and Prelude" featured pretty blue fans as props for uninteresting choreography. But

"Bijoux," an exhausting series of vignettes (pose, spin, run, grimace, pose) danced charmingly by Teri Weksler, fared better.

Morris's own performance is appealing, as "Love, You Have Won" — a send-up with the shapes of early dance augmented by a slapstick wit — proved. The concert repeats tonight.