

CALENDAR

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MARK MORRIS
choreographer



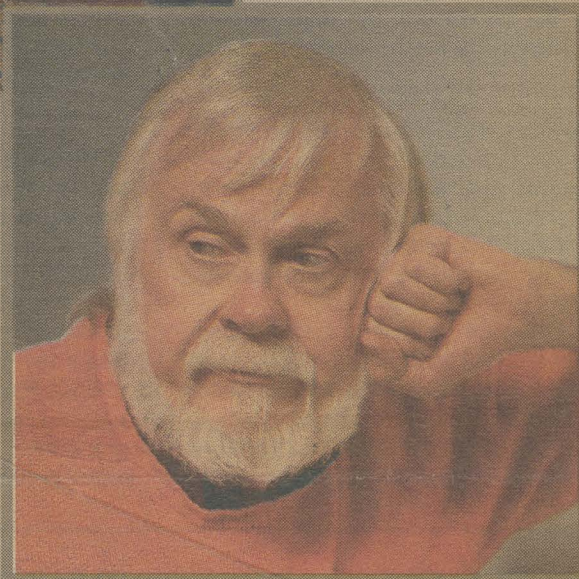
TINA BROWN
Vanity Fair editor



WYNTON MARSALIS
musician



JOHN BALDESSARI
conceptual artist



TASTE MAKERS

They influence taste in the arts. But what are the influences in their lives? Calendar presents its second annual panel of taste makers. Interviews begin on Page 3.



CAROLYN PFEIFFER
film producer/distributor



LINDA ELLERBEE
TV newscaster

PETER GABRIEL
singer/songwriter



ROBERT WILSON
theater director



MARK MORRIS

A DANCE ON THE WILD SIDE

By ROBERT GRESKOVIC

NEW YORK—Although Mark Morris arrived for his interview in a crowded SoHo bistro on crutches, with his recently fractured foot in a clunky wooden shoe, he was not what you'd call low-key. Slowed down does not mean toned down for this widely acclaimed and wildly talented young dance artist.

His garments were largely black, but Morris looked anything but sedate. A gold Argyle sock dressed his injured foot, an appliqued and embroidered shirt from Thailand covered the front of his torso like a mosaic and a strand of tiny turquoise beads harmonized distinctly with his sharp blue eyes.

His thick, wavy, dark hair—casually brushed away from his angled face—left his large ears exposed, allowing him to point out the newer of the two silver earrings in his left ear: a tiny angel. "I think it's Lucifer," he volunteered.

Taking into account the circumstances that have made him prominent, Morris spoke soberly of his near future as a higher-ante challenge. "Now I have to deliver!" he said. Though he denied seeing himself as a taste maker, Morris did say with certainty, "I think I have taste."

Indeed, earlier this month, the New Yorker dance critic, Arlene Croce, wrote that Morris "has become the most widely interviewed, most talked-about and most commissioned young choreographer in American dance. He interests magazine editors as much as artistic directors, he attracts the musical as well as the dance public and he holds connoisseurs of fashion spellbound."

His dances, each as different as its score, all show a consistent sensitivity, but not a subservience, to their accompaniments. When a piece of music—be it a nitty-gritty ballad by the Violent Femmes, the waltzes of Brahms, or some pop Thai—captures Morris' fancy, he responds to the enticement with a complimentary intensity.

Morris shapes his choreography out of his music, not simply alongside it; his works are made of images, not motions. To Morris, dance and music both have their own integrity, and the blending of the two into a third dimension becomes the business of his choreographic art. Regularly, the results are dances of inspired and unusual beauty.

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Morris' wide-ranging imagination mirrors his wide-ranging interests. He was not bothered at all by being labeled eclectic, but he did not react kindly to the notion that his eclecticism spreads him too thin: "I'm really interested in a lot of stuff," he said, "but I am not a dilettante."

In general, Morris has a strong liking for



The Mark Morris Dance Group performs "Gloria," a dance from his recent Baroque music-inspired phase.

things Asian, with a special focus on the aesthetics of Thailand—quite evident in his work. Morris' multicolored shirt was recently brought back from Thailand by a friend. So was "a big carved *garuda* [an angel/woman to hang from the ceiling] and a bunch of sarongs, 'cause I always wear sarongs."

When asked for his view of recent trends, Morris bypassed fashion and aesthetics and zeroed in on politics. He is distressed by pervasive signs of narrow-mindedness: "I don't particularly like bigotry, and I don't particularly like the

to the programs he and his dancers perform—he calls them "shows." His latest show was built around Baroque music. Four performances of this program were part of the Brooklyn Academy of Music's "Next Wave Festival," and proved to be the most popular of the dance events.

Earlier this year, Morris created a show based around some penetrating essays by Roland Barthes on mundane subjects: wrestling, soap powders, detergents and striptease. Then, this fall he became the youngest choreographer to be the subject of an entire PBS "Dance in America"

associating with me."

The project developed further when Morris suggested a composition by Eastern-inspired composer Lou Harrison; a piece "based on Hopi or Navajo poetry, and all sorts of spiritualism—pre-New Age Pantheism." Morris is a fan of Harrison's music. "He's an original," he insisted, placing Harrison well ahead of all trendy minimalist/Orientalist composers now prominent in American music.

For reading, Morris said he's finally finishing "Vampire Lestat" by Anne Rice, and revealed that another book of hers, "Interview With the Vampire," inspired "One Charming Night," a vampire dance to Purcell that he made last year. His other readings include "Less Than Zero," which he called "a really good, really depressing book about growing up with no values in L.A., a fabulous book about Giotto, and the liner notes from cassettes."

The issue of religion recently attached itself to Morris' work, when in responding to the integrity of Pergolesi's "Stabat Mater," he created a dance with blatant Christian symbolism. His innocent and basic reverence for the text of his score puzzled some viewers and dance writers. A crucifix he wore as part of his costume for curtain calls upset his lighting designer, who thought Morris was making a joke of the whole piece. But Morris said, "that little plastic cross means the same thing that the whole dance does," referring once again to his belief in being like this . . . for an hour.

"I think of myself as a basic humanist," he said regarding his outlook on the world. "Yeah, I'm spiritual, I believe in God."

"That's it, I have a faith that dare not speak its name." □

TASTE MAKERS

'It's very bad to be a homosexual and an artist right now. Your belief goes into your work whether you want it to or not.' On his 'anti-Establishment' thrust: 'It's not politically utopian; it's like, "now, let's just be like this . . . for an hour.'"

political climate of the country in which I live," he stated flatly. "It's very bad to be a homosexual and an artist right now."

How does this uneasiness affect his work? Morris returns to aesthetic concerns: "Your belief goes into your work whether you want it to or not." He admits, however, that there is probably an "anti-Establishment" thrust in what he does. "It's not politically utopian," he suggests, "it's like, 'Now, let's just be like this . . . for an hour.'"

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Morris has always referred quite plainly

show; in an hour's time he presented seven intentionally different dances. He also created new works for both the Boston and Joffrey ballets.

His next project will be a work performed in concert with the Seattle Men's Chorus. Seattle, where Morris was born and raised, remains his home base, though he spends a good deal of time working and performing in New York.

This particular endeavor was initiated by the Men's Chorus: "The director approached me because I'm famous; he knew or read about me and was interested in