

Choreographer Morris puts his best feet forward here

■ **Mark Morris Dance Group**, 8 p.m. July 11 and 12, Bagley Wright Theater (\$12-\$16; 628-0888).

by **Carole Beers**
Times dance critic

Mark Morris, a Seattle native who is dance's darling and the world's most popular choreographer, next weekend gives Seattle a look at how he's earned kudos in New York and Europe.

The 29-year-old *wunderkind* will perform with his Mark Morris Dance Group, plus members of his two-week summer dance intensive, at 8 p.m. Saturday and next Sunday in Bagley Wright Theater — a change from previously booked Meany Hall, where crews still are filming Pacific Northwest Ballet's "Nutcracker."

Morris previewed his concerts through videotapes last week in Kane Hall.

His pale, smoky-eyed face framed by dark curls and his slight, graceful body dressed in a plaid camp shirt and loose trousers, Morris gave nonchalant introductions to excerpts from a collection of waltzes, parts of the longer "Gloria" piece (to Vivaldi music), and the "Wrestlers" section of the

DANCE

evening-long "Mythologies."

The latter earned him raves heard 'round the world; it premiered in 1984 at Brooklyn Academy of Music's Next Wave Festival, after which New York-weary Morris returned to Seattle to work and teach.

Although each piece on tape last week appeared different, all reverberated with references to movement ranging from the athletic to the balletic. And all were literal — and keenly intelligent — interpretations of sound scores, whether Vivaldi or *musique concrète*, suggesting the cheers and jeers of wrestling crowds.

Only "Gloria" will be seen next weekend. It also airs on public television's "Dance in America" series next fall.

An exultant piece, it is full of 180-degree changes of direction, leaps in canon or unison, arms flying heavenward, every note and phrase of the choral composition reflected in human movement.

"It has a lot of steps," Morris said. "It had many more. There's at least one dancer for each of the lead singing parts — soprano, tenor, alto, bass. I made it in the early '80s, but have revised it by

throwing out one-third of the steps, which didn't seem to hurt it any."

Not seen on videotape, but to be performed Friday and Saturday: "40 Arms, 20 necks, One Wreathing" (music by Herschel Garfein), "Handel Choruses (Handel)" and "The Shepherd on the Rock" (Franz Schubert).

Morris said he begins creating a dance by listening to music repeatedly before going into the studio and suggesting a shape, trusting his dancers to fill in details, which can change with each performance.

"But it varies," said the Franklin High School graduate with a grin. "I don't hunt things out (for inspiration). If it hits me, I go with it."

Morris said he attended wrestling matches at Madison Square Garden to get ideas for his "Wrestling" piece. He described wrestling as "stupid and cartoonlike, but very theatrical, very cathartic. If you want to go see wrestling, you go see wrestling. If you want to see dance... you go see wrestling." Meaning, you pick out what is theatrical, what "works."

"In the theater, I want to see something I don't see all the time. (It) should make you ask questions, or see something differently. Something has to happen, something special — if not life-changing."



Lois Greenfield

Mark Morris, a Seattle native who is the most popular choreographer in the world, says of his style: "I don't hunt things out. If it hits me, I go with it."