

40 Arms, 20 Necks and a Seattle charmer

By Jon Blake
Special to the P-I

Last night's Mark Morris Dance Group performance in the Bagley Wright Theater was a delightful homecoming to Seattle's choreographic charmer.

In dance, the arrival of any new choreographic talent is always greeted with great excitement. Now, with works in many dance companies, choreographic fellowships, and offers for operatic stagings, Morris is in position to claim the national spotlight.

Morris chose to open the evening with "40 Arms, 20 Necks, One Wreathing," a work that diverges from what has usually been expected. Instead of a humorous, playful dance of witty gestures,

DANCE REVIEW

Mark Morris Dance Group, last night at Bagley Wright Theater. All-Morris program: "40 Arms, 20 Necks, One Wreathing," "Handel Choruses," "The Shepherd on the Rock" and "Gloria." Sold-out performance tonight at 8.

this piece is austere, with cryptic movements. Four dancers in pink leotards lead a corps of 16 clad in black.

In addition to danced sections featuring natural movements and postural lines accentuated with spotlight pedestals, and discontinuities. All-in-all a marked departure from the previous Morris work seen locally.

The following four solos performed to Handel choruses are

vintage Morris, if one can use the word for such a young artist. The "Jealousy" solo, from Handel's "Hercules," gave the audience a chance to see Morris perform his own work with idiosyncratic style. No one else can match the quickness and precision.

Morris' playful "The Shepherd on the Rock," to the *lieder* of the same name by Franz Schubert, exhibits a playfully romantic aspect to the choreographer's tem-

perament. The three couples in the dance, dressed to evoke a pastoral fantasy of sun hats, skirts, and breeches, sweep across the stage and around each other, often stopping to support each other in stylized embraces.

The program's final offering was a return to the ecclesiastical with Morris' treatment of Antonio Vivaldi's "Gloria." Once again, Morris has chosen to rend music, light, and dance. The performers divide their time between floor-bound, prone scooting, and glorious, fast moving dancing, with leaps and large sweeping turns. "Gloria" is further testimony to the real genius Morris has when treating vocal music, especially religious material.