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BURRELLE'S

## Jacob's Pillow Offers Eclectic Morris Work

By ALEX BLOOMSTEIN

BECKET, Mass. — Called "the most promising of his generation" and definitely one of the hottest choreographers around, the enigmatic Mark Morris brought his Dance Group to Jacob's Pillow Tuesday night in a program that gave the Berkshires a look at the eclectic work of this talented young artist.

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Morris cut his teeth in New York as a member of the loft scene but has, without question, left his post-Modern contemporaries behind. At the same time, one could not call him a completely mainstream choreographer either. He is attempting to create a niche for himself that is somewhere between the pedestrian, natural and commonplace work of many of the post-Moderns, and the often times very literal, dramatic and narrative nature of mainstream choreographers.

This has put him between a rock and a hard place, as sometimes it's a struggle for both the audience and the choreographer himself to know from which direction the work is coming. When he succeeds, as he did often during this performance, the result is both exhilarating and beautiful and, when he fails, one knows it's only temporary.

At 30 years of age, it's just a matter of time before he gets a complete grip on his vision and refines his craft to accommodate that vision. He has all the tools with which to do it too.

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His understanding of movement, its form and dynamic variety, is extremely well-rounded, perhaps due to the fact that he not only has danced with choreographers like Twyla Tharp, Lar Lubovitch and Eliot Feld, but has also performed Balkan folk dancing and flamenco. His strongest assets, however, revolve around his musicality and his sense of space and pattern. In these respects, he is totally enveloped in the most classical of structures, whether the music be punk rock 'n' roll or Schubert lieder. Every crescendo, every dynamic nuance, is represented in the movement. It is very obvious and a recognition of his talent that it works.

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The program opened with the East Coast premiere of "The Shepherd on the Rock." Set to songs by Schubert, it was the least successful piece on the program. It seemed as though Morris was trying to force himself to make a certain kind of piece, one that had no content and was purely visual and, as a result, it lacked the seamlessness of the other works. It also lacked much of the punch.

"Dogtown," which followed, was a complete change of pace. With punkish music by Yoko Ono and dancers in brassieres, panties and surgical gloves, the piece was oblique, frenetic and bizarre. All the fluidity the first work was attempting to create was turned into a raw and highly charged sexual environment. Included in this interesting romp were many images of dogs doing all the things dogs do, though this literalness was tempered evenly by the overall visual and musical nature of the work.

"Ballabili," was a throw-away, bordering on slapstick, with direct references to ancient Egypt. Two-dimensional shapes and frozen poses characterized the piece, with dancers being moved around like mannequins. What saved this work was Morris' humor clearly coming through and his sense of shape and pattern. One couldn't help thinking that one had seen it all before, but again, with Morris' fresh perspective, he has the ability to make it new and different.

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In "One Charming Night," Morris combined all his talents and a few shortcomings. A duet for himself and Teri Weksler, it was the clearest vision of his work. Musicality, dynamic ebb and flow, and precise timing were impeccably articulated.

Ostensibly about love, the work opens with Weksler alone on a bench. She does a solo in melancholia, presumably waiting for her lover. When he enters, the movement fireworks begin to fly. They come together and mirror each other, learning from each other. As the piece moves from the more abstract to the more narrative though, one begins to lose contact with the dancers. The gestures become too melodramatic and forced and the work ends on a weaker note. Morris needs to perhaps learn to work a little hard getting his point across.

Both Weksler and Morris danced the work beautifully. Weksler is one of the most remarkable modern dancers around and she appears right now to be at the peak of her talents. Her movement is incredibly precise, her phrasing and transitions flawless and she has the ability to let you see every little nuance in the choreography.

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The program concluded with "Gloria," an exhilarating and powerful piece set to music by Vivaldi. On the surface it seemed to be a piece that could have been choreographed by any of the mainstreamers but there were definite elements completely Morris. These included strong use of the floor, complex and original patterns, and a generous amount of movement. His company took advantage of the wild nature of "Gloria" and danced it to the hilt.