

Dance: Mark Morris at Jacob's Pillow

By JACK ANDERSON

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BECKET, Mass., July 23 — Mark Morris's fondness for choreographing works in many different styles was certainly evident when the Mark Morris Dance Group appeared Tuesday night at the Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival.

The program included the first performances in the East of two works created earlier this year in Seattle. "The Shepherd on the Rock," to a recording of Schubert's song of the same name, found Mr. Morris in a romantic mood. Three couples, dressed as if for a country outing, ran lightly in circular patterns and, with the giddiness of young lovers, swung one another about.

However, much of the choreography for the work's opening scene was self-conscious. There were clumsy partnering sequences and equally awkward passages in which dancers were required to crawl on the floor around their partners. Mr. Morris also kept tossing out little dramatic suggestions that remained unexplored. For instance, he had one of his young swains wear spectacles. But what point about characterization he sought to make by this was never clear. Moreover, the piece as a whole looked underrehearsed. Nevertheless, when the words of Schubert's text for the finale referred to the coming of spring, the dancers rushed onstage like vernal breezes.

Mr. Morris turned prankish in "Ballabili," to music from Verdi's "Aida." Moving stiffly with arms in angular positions, six dancers resembled Egyptian hieroglyphics come preposterously to life. Then they burst into a lively, but essentially decorous, bacchanal of the sort favored by choreographers of operaballets earlier in this century.

Other works were taken from the company's repertory. In "Dogtown," Mr. Morris became abrasive. When it was over, a little girl in the audience remarked that the movement reminded her of the ways dogs behave and, at times, the dancers did indeed roll on the floor and hold their hands as if they were paws. Yet grownups might have suspected that in this work Mr. Morris was really depicting people acting like beasts — and not always friendly ones. Thus, in one scene, some people tried to paw at people who didn't want such attentions at all. And, in other scenes, the dancers grew quarrelsome, prowling as if they were getting ready to snarl and bite.

Mr. Morris perhaps could have made his intentions even clearer because the dance kept vacillating between being simply a study in odd, harsh movement and being a snappish satiric comment on nasty behav-



Lois Greenfield

Mark Morris performing in "One Charming Night."

ior. It also came to a somewhat abrupt end.

"One Charming Night" started out by appearing to be a duet for a prim young woman (Teri Weksler) and a suitor (Mr. Morris), who was at times shy and awkward and at other times bumblingly enthusiastic. But before the piece was over, it turned out to be a comically macabre encounter with a vampire.

All four of these works — the old as well as the new — contained bright choreographic ideas. Yet, occasionally, those ideas were not fully developed. All four works were also rather trifling. If they attested to Mr. Morris's ability to put steps together in pleasing or surprising ways, they suggested that he can be a victim of his own facility.

Fortunately, the program contained a fifth work that was serious in its intent, solidly constructed and exhilarating to behold. "Gloria," an ensemble piece to Vivaldi, did indeed offer choreographic hosannas. But, first, there was struggle. The choreography emphasized images of effort. Nothing came easily in this dance, therefore it could not be accused of sentimental optimism.

Dancers crawled laboriously for-

ward. People dragged other people about. Bodies kept falling to the ground. But those bodies always tried to rise again. And when everyone at last participated in contrapuntal patterns of rejoicing, one felt that these people had genuine reasons to do so. "Gloria" celebrated what the theologian Paul Tillich once called "the courage to be."

Poetry Prize to Feldman

Irving Feldman, an author and teacher, has been awarded the 50th prize for "distinguished poetic achievement" by the Academy of American Poets. Mr. Feldman, a professor at the State University of New York at Buffalo, is the author of eight collections of poetry, the most recent being "All of Us Here," released last month by Viking-Penguin. He will receive a \$10,000 fellowship. Previous recipients include Robert Frost, William Carlos Williams, Ezra Pound, Marianne Moore and Elizabeth Bishop. In addition to the fellowship grants, the Academy of American Poets, which is based in New York City, sponsors awards for young poets as well as readings, symposiums and walking tours.