

Morris Has Arrived With 'Dance' Hour

TV REVIEW

By Janice Berman

IF YOU NEEDED EVIDENCE that the hot young choreographer Mark Morris is being taken seriously by the dance world, here it is: At 29, Morris has been given his own hour on "Dance in America," the television program that has in the past showcased some of the biggest names in dance: George Balanchine, Martha Graham, Paul Taylor.

The one-hour show tonight at 9 on WNET / Ch. 13 is a study in contrasts: Morris' choreographic inventiveness and frequent outrageousness juxtaposed with a series of vignettes of him at home in Seattle, going to the market, wandering in a park, and cooking in his mother's kitchen, where Mom herself makes a cameo appearance.

It's a nice metaphor for his style, which at once honors the verities of ballet and stretches its boundaries, as well as those of modern dance. Morris mocks, Morris goes punk, and, often, Morris and his dancers delight.

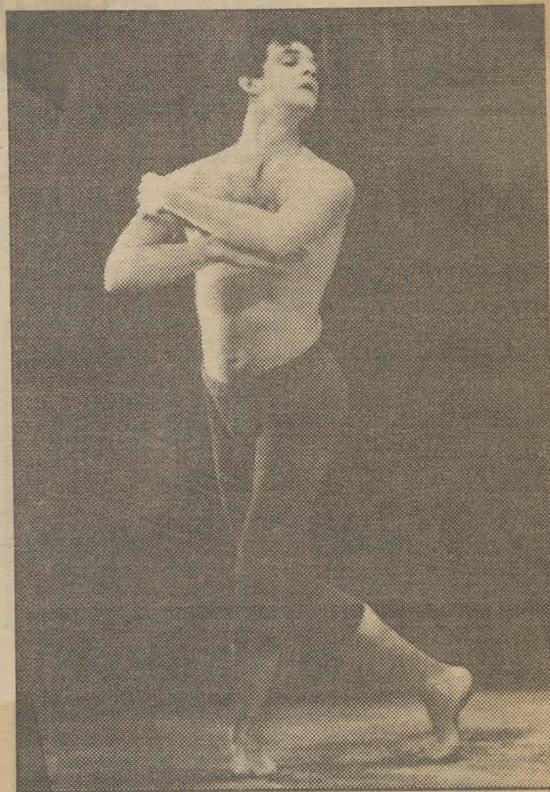
Morris' own body — showcased in the self-devouring solo, "Jealousy," set to Handel — has a manneristic, sinuous, rippling quality. He can do ballet — he used to teach it — but, he might say, thank God he doesn't have to. The show presents seven Morris pieces danced by his troupe of 12; among the accompaniments are Handel, Yoko Ono, Vivaldi, and an unknown Indian film score.

The latter, "The Tamil Film Songs in Stereo Pas de Deux," is a howl. Morris and Penny Hutchinson enact the roles of dancing master and student; the movement, like some of Morris' other work, is based on Indian folk steps.

But he can also go for baroque, as in the amusing "Love, You Have Won," with its dueling cherubs (Morris and Guillermo Resto) in flowing shirts. Or turn nasty, as in "Dogtown," set to Ono. He tells interviewer Holly Brubach that making dances requires "a good spirit of humanity," but little humanity is evident in what's going on here; the company is on all fours, sniffing at each other when they aren't grabbing at each other.

"Gloria," a piece set to Vivaldi that is rapidly becoming Morris' signature, is given an unnecessary monolithic set here that distracts from the beauty of the work, where dancers leap with Tayloresque buoyancy or crawl on their bellies like reptiles in a thoroughly contemporary meditation on human evolution, life and salvation.

At times, at least on a small screen, the products of Morris' expansive imagination look crammed into an area too small for them. But on the whole, as a sampler of the work of an audacious new voice in dance, the show merits attention. /■



Mark Morris on 'Dance in America' tonight

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