

Mark Morris dances to his own wild spirit



By Lois Greenfield

UNPREDICTABLE: Mark Morris dances on tonight's 'Great Performances' special on PBS at 9 EDT/PDT (times may vary).

By Linda Winer
USA TODAY

NEW YORK — Mark Morris cooks for his mom at the start of his *Great Performances* special on PBS tonight, but supper isn't all that's steaming.

Morris, 30, is the hottest dancer-choreographer since Twyla Tharp. Besides his hour-long TV debut (which actually includes kitchen scenes at home), the year brought commissions from the Joffrey and Boston ballets. *Esquire* recently named him one of the "under 40s" who are changing the USA. And his company dances at the prestigious Next Wave festival at the Brooklyn Academy of Music Nov. 12-15.

Not bad for a guy who fled the wilds of Manhattan to return home to Seattle.

"People read these fabulous magazine articles about me and say, 'My gawd! Where did he come from?'" says Morris, a flamboyant, outspoken fellow with big black curls and a great laugh behind his eyes. "Come on! Gimme a break! I've been working for a long time."

In fact, Morris started developing his unpredictable satiric-raunchy-exquisitely-structured

On tour

New York	Nov. 12-15
Brooklyn Academy of Music	
Storrs, Conn.	Nov. 19
Jorgensen Auditorium	
Urbana, Ill.	March 26-28
Krannert Center	
Iowa City, Iowa . . .	March 31
Hancher Auditorium	
Ithaca, N.Y.	April 11
Statler Auditorium	
Washington, D.C. . .	May 14-16
Kennedy Center	
Richmond, Va. . . .	May 19-20
Virginia Museum	

dances at 9. He began with flamenco lessons and later joined a Balkan dance troupe, throwing himself into the earthy, rhythmically complex folk dances that still give gravity and color to his personable work.

He moved from Seattle to New York in 1976, danced with many major troupes, and started his own company in 1980. "My dancers are very strong. They've got musicality and have read a few books at some point in their lives. They're all different and they won't take s--- from me."

Morris moved back to Seat-

tle because "it's beautiful and I like being around my family." The company lives here, but all travel a lot.

Morris, who's candidly gay, once said he left ballet because he "got tired of pretending to be a straight guy in love with a ballerina." Some of his work has a dark edge (people assaulting ugly little naked dolls), many are seriously funny; all are sublimely musical (with inspiration from classical to country, East Indian to Yoko Ono).

And they have what Morris describes as "good spirits. Like, if you're a real icky creep and you hate everybody, your work may be beautifully constructed and interesting intellectually. But it won't ever be fulfilling. I just think it shows."

Nor does he worry about being dance flavor-of-the-month. "The only real popular danger is the masterpiece syndrome. If people want everything to top the last thing, they're going to dances for the wrong reason. They're going because they want to see Baryshnikov dance and dance until he breaks his kneecaps. And then they're satisfied — 'Oh, yes, he's just like me.' It's so stupid."