

# Whiz-kid hits town

## Dance Review

By CLIVE BARNES

AT A time when so many dancers of the post-modern persuasion seem to have abandoned dance in favor of performance art in which dancing itself has only a minor role to play, young Mark Morris, popular dance whiz-kid from Seattle, is refreshingly different.

Morris obviously admires dancing as such, and his dance and dancers have a kinetic pulse and movement energy that are unconfusingly choreographic.



The current appearance of his company, the Mark Morris Dance Group, as part of the Next Wave Festival at the Brooklyn Academy of Music, has proved a box-office bonanza. Audiences obviously respond to the eagerness of his style.

Yet, at present, I find that style, and his whole approach to dance, disconcerting. I am not precisely nonplussed by it, but I would scarcely call myself plussed either.

His BAM program opened with a piece called "Marble Halls," and then offered the American premieres of "Pieces en Concert" and "Stabat Mater."

It was a painless evening, but a little tedious. Morris has lots of structural imagination, and underpins his dance constructions with slavish adherence to the music beat.

Doubtless it could be argued that such repetition matches the baroque architectonics of the music Morris so often favors.

This provides a variety and complexity to the esthetic design that is never going to be encompassed by the accumulated repetition of simple dance steps.

Morris's method of operation can be seen from the program's outset in "Marble Halls," an ensemble work to Bach's Concerto in C Minor for Two Harpsichords.

Despite some structural interest in the arrangement and interplay of three lines of dancers, the movement given the dancers, dressed as if for tennis in hideous shades of mauve and orange, is either naive or banal or both.

However, as I have noticed a couple of seasons back, Morris is an exceptional dancer, with naturally vivid movement style and incisive presence.

There was a theatricality that bodes well for Morris's future. But he needs language for dance — which can never live on structure or even atmosphere alone.