

shadows. More memorable still were Gordon and Setterfield, husband and wife, side by side, stepping in unison in a small circle, his eyes never leaving her. Since the piece began with her recorded voice saying, "I am growing old," and since we know she is a few years the elder, the personal reverberations of their intimacy suffused the duet with tenderness.

When he fell behind (or she outstripped him) and they became separated, he marked time in place while she advanced, accelerated, disappeared. Here was the best of Gordon—succinct, moving—in a few haunting moments.

Barbara Newman

**Mark Morris Dance Group
Brooklyn Academy of Music
November 12-15, 1986**

The Mark Morris backlash is under way, and as if to abet it Morris is now making dances of immense rigor, dances that you have to see twice. The featured item of his brief season at BAM's Next Wave Festival, *Stabat Mater*, to Pergolesi's hymn, was a plain but difficult work of severe religious feeling. Morris has taken on religious themes before (e.g., *Gloria*), and he is famous for his prayerful little bows at curtain calls and for thanking "god," along with his mother, in his program notes. But in *Stabat Mater*, unlike those other examples, there is nothing adorable, not a trace of the pantheistic feeling or Zen chic of the sixties. It is, you would have to say, a Roman Catholic dance, about the thing that its music is about—suffering, specifically the suffering of the Virgin Mary upon seeing her son nailed on a cross—and it has in it all the gravity, the sheer weight of agony, of Baroque painters' treatments of this theme.

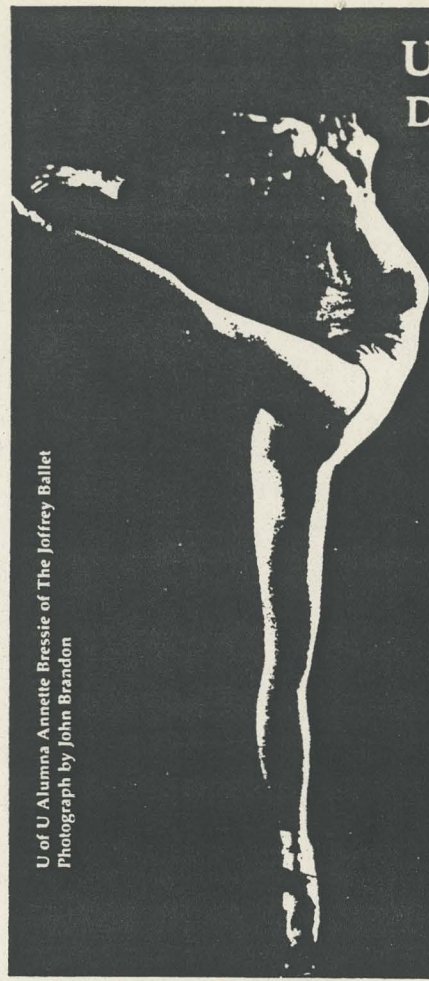
At the same time, it is thoroughly contemporary. The language of faith is made rude. All the emotions are there: humility, wonder, yearning, betrayal, grief. But humility, for example, is a body seen from behind, with a hand hanging between the legs—something almost doglike. (Remember *Dogtown*.) Betrayal is one dancer dropping another as if he simply forgot he was holding him. The deposition is a body lifted upside down, stiff with rigor mortis, hard and heavy to carry. Grief is a face buried in another's abdomen. All these gestures are far more abstract than my description of them, and they are made more abstract still by repetition and recombination throughout the piece.

The dance is not just tough, but contained. It is relentlessly sectional, obedient to the music; it refuses to build with the "spontaneity" of stage emotion. Four dancers do a dance, and finish, and are replaced by four other dancers doing a dance. (Later, the groups grow to eight, and finally to twelve: a tidy times-four progression.) The stage too is contained. Drop curtains block off, first, about three-quarters of the stage, then about half, and only at the end yield the

(see NYC REVIEWS, page 36)

U of U Alumna Annette Bressie of The Jeffrey Ballet
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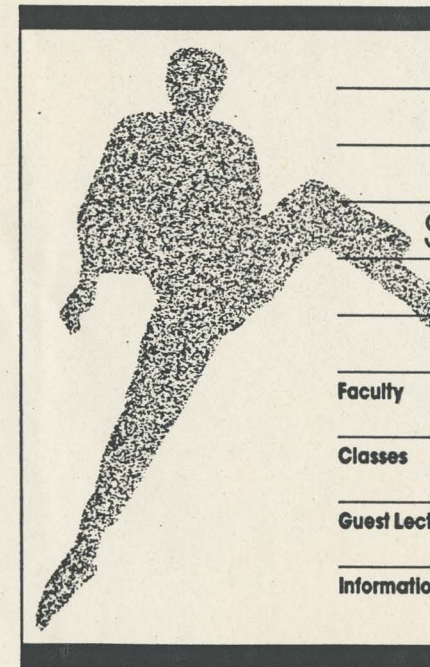
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(NYC REVIEWS, from page 35)

dancers the entire space. Designed by Robert Bordo, each of these drops shows a huge cross: the first in flames, the second in a field of black smudges, the final one (it is lavender) pitched in a sky of violets. I think these were hell, purgatory, and heaven, painted in a deliberately lurid manner—the work's sole manifestation of the pop theatricality that is part of Morris' postmodernism.

Actually, however, the whole work is quintessentially postmodern, and shows just how strong that style can be—how irony can be serious, how "period" work can be made our own, how emotion, if blocked from its accustomed outlets, can soak the very ground of the mind. At the end, in the "Amen," the cross, under Phil Sandström's lighting, turns a deathly black. The group forms two lines, and a dancer at the end of each line slaloms down the row of his fellows, charging toward the audience. For redemption, this is a strange image—exhilarating, sporty, and brutal. Like the rest of the piece, it renounces grandeur for a feeling that is more modest, unforgetting.

The *Stabat Mater* was beautifully sung by Drew Minter and Julianne Baird and beautifully played by the St. Luke's Chamber Ensemble, under Michael Feldman. For days afterward, the music, along with images from the dance, wouldn't leave my head. The concert also included the 1985 *Marble Halls*, along with the new *Pièces en Concert*, an hilarious neo-eighteenth-century divertimento—Morris, Rob Besserer, Susan Hadley, and five potted trees—that the audience liked a lot better than *Stabat Mater*.

Joan Acocella

**Rosas
Brooklyn Academy of Music
October 28-November 2, 1986**

The young Belgian Anne Teresa de Keersmaecker's dance for her company called "Rosas" is called *Rosas Danst Rosas*, which is like saying, "A dance is a dance is a dance." It takes place on a bare stage backed by a black plastic cyclorama reminiscent of a garbage bag. At the beginning, four women—de Keersmaecker, Nadine Gagnase, Roxane Huilmand, and Fumiyo Ikeda—are trapped in a triangle of light. Later the light (its designers are Remon Fromont and Bert de Raeymaecker) will come from the sides, and still later from overhead. At the end, there will be only a work light, making everything bare. But at first, the women are trapped the way sometimes an insect is trapped in amber.

The four are of a size, and dressed alike, in T-shirts, blouses, skirts, and tights—white, gray, black. The dancers are lying on the floor. They begin to move repetitively, cumulatively, to quiet music (by Thierry de Mey and Peter Vermeersch) that sounds like clapping—syncopated and percussive. Later they will dance in silence; still later to music that will get louder and louder—too loud. But for now, four women are moving in