

Brussels Invites U.S. Troupe To Replace Béjart Company

By JENNIFER DUNNING

The Mark Morris Dance Company has been invited to become the resident dance company of the Théâtre Royal de la Monnaie in Brussels, the former home of Maurice Béjart's Ballet of the 20th Century. The theater's board of directors is to vote on the proposal next Wednesday.

"I expect complete agreement next week," the director of the theater, Gérard Mortier, said yesterday, speaking of his invitation to the young American modern dance company. "There has been a marvelous reaction."

Mr. Mortier said Mr. Morris was suggested to him by the director Peter Sellars. Mr. Morris choreographed a production of "Nixon in China," an opera by John Adams directed by Mr. Sellars, to be performed in December at the Brooklyn Academy of Music.

"He told me Mark was the new choreographer," Mr. Mortier said in New York recently while discussing the proposed move with Mr. Morris's dancers. "Mark and his ballet were performing just then in Stuttgart. I took the plane the next day. It was love at first sight."

Mr. Mortier cited Mr. Morris's musicality and sense of humor as important factors in his decision to invite the company. "Maurice Béjart was always Nietzsche," Mr. Mortier said. "Mark is one who knows about Nietzsche, but he can tell about it with humor. And for the first time we will

do ballet with music rather than tape. Now I can work with someone I appreciate to build something completely new."

Mr. Mortier said Mr. Morris would not be called upon to choreograph for the opera. "I hate ballet in the opera," he said. "It has no dramaturgical meaning."

Under the terms of the proposed three-year contract, Mr. Morris's company would be based in Brussels six months each year, with two seasons and two months of rehearsals annually, and projected tours to Paris and London. The company will continue to perform in New York each year. It would have a \$1.5 million annual budget — an increase of \$1 million over its current budget — as well as its own technical staff and the use of eight new dance studios, each with its own video equipment.

The Morris company would make its debut in Brussels on Nov. 15, 1988 with a new ballet set to Handel's "Allegro, il Penseroso ed il Moderato," a longtime project for the choreographer. It will be performed with singers and musicians from the theater's opera company.

"It's a total life change," Mr. Morris said. "I can do all my shows without tape, which is what I've always wanted. It was such a gigantic hassle to get one kazoo artist to accompany you at BAM. The great luxury of three days' rehearsal before you open has now become a matter of weeks. You think, 'Wouldn't it be great if I could this?' and then someone says, 'Would you like to do this?' But this is more than I could have dreamed of."