

arts/entertainment

Dance: a Benefit for AIDS

BY HILARY OSTLERE

Early fall usually brings its sprinkling of benefits and galas — in some social circles it's a torrent. The dance world, however, is organizing a particularly special event, taking place Monday, October 5, at the New York State Theater.

"Dancing for Life" is not just another event to raise money for a company (sometimes one of the few ways a dance troupe manages to keep solvent or, at least, pull through for another season). "Dancing for Life" is the collaborative effort of thirteen companies, all of them major entities in the dance world, to raise money to fight AIDS. \$1.4 million is the target figure, with money being donated to the American Foundation for AIDS Research, Gay Men's Health Crisis, National AIDS Network and organizations involved in hospice care and direct services.

Dancers and choreographers of very different artistic philosophies are collaborating willingly in this giant fundraising effort. People (dare one name them?) who might be daggers drawn usually, will present a solid phalanx in this gala evening with one common purpose. American Ballet Theatre, for example, will be rubbing toes with the New York City Ballet, perhaps its greatest rival. Often these two are competing box office attractions when they play across the Lincoln Center plaza from each other. The rest of the generous and hopefully lucky thirteen include the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, Dance Theatre of Harlem, Merce Cunningham

Dance Company, Laura Dean Dancers and Musicians, Feld Ballet, Martha Graham Dance Company, The Joffrey Ballet, Lar Lubovitch Dance Company, Mark Morris Dance Group, The Paul Taylor Dance Company and Twyla Tharp Dance. Some line up.

Although Lar Lubovitch has been credited with generating the idea of a dance benefit for AIDS, the artistic coordinator is Jerome Robbins, co-ballet master-in-chief of the New York City Ballet. Robbins, with his immense experience in musical theatre and ballet, can be guaranteed to put on a great show; and with the material he's working with he ought to.

The evening, with ticket prices ranging from \$50 to \$250 and up to \$5,000 if you want to get really fancy and attend a cocktail party and dinner, is, as David White of Dance Theater Workshop pointed out is, "probably beyond the pocketbooks of most dancers and the younger people who regularly support dance" — in fact most of the audience who attended the recent Bessie Awards at City Center Theater. But it was at those awards that a most moving speech was made by Bessie Schonberg herself. This straight-backed, grey-haired lady came on stage and delivered a most melancholy speech in her softly accented voice. A renowned teacher of dance composition, Bessie Schonberg is a revered figure in the arts world and her words about how AIDS is

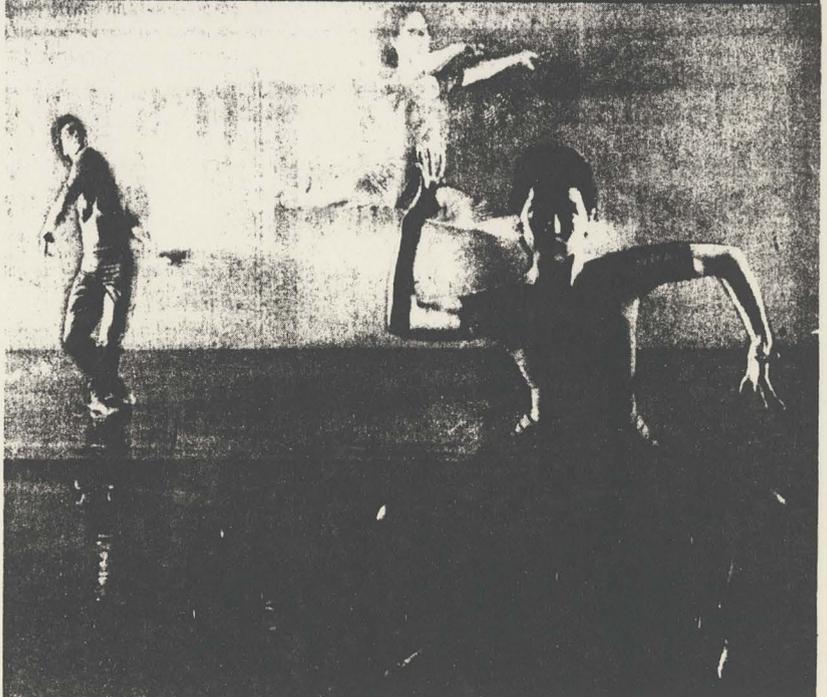
decimating a generation of dancers, some of the most promising choreographers and so many more in the artistic community, were moving indeed, calling AIDS "an unprecedented factor that is shaping the arts in the 80's." When she had concluded, circles of light fell on the empty stage and the pure ring of Tibetan bells chimed as, gradually, the entire stage was flooded with light and the curtain silently fell.

When the curtain goes up at the State Theater next month it will be on a unique effort to help the AIDS crisis. The dance world bands together for a moment as one great lustrous shield in the defense against AIDS.

Corporations too, must be given credit for sponsoring this dance gala, with AT&T, the New York Marriot Marquis and Philip Morris Companies heading the list.

And in case you don't believe that all these dance companies will really cooperate in one work or another during the gala evening, let me quote Jerome Robbins: "This is the first time a pool of such great dance companies will share the same stage...for instance, members of the New York City Ballet, American Ballet The-

atre, Dance Theatre of Harlem and the Joffrey Ballet will perform together in the final movement of Balanchine's Symphony in C" (Bizet). He said the audience could look for unexpected crossbreedings between companies, "And, yes, Mikhail Baryshnikov will perform."



Revelations, the Yellow Section (top); Laura Dean Dancers (bottom)