

13 TROUPES JOIN 'DANCING FOR LIFE' WAR ON AIDS

By ROBERT GRESKOVIC

NEW YORK—Speaking at "Dancing for Life," a gala benefit performance at the New York State Theater here Monday night, Mikhail Baryshnikov announced a war on AIDS. Quoting phrases by singer Bette Midler, Baryshnikov called the disease "an enemy that has no allies" and concluded with the belief that "we will win."

After thanking all the dancers and related company officials who donated their time to this event—in which a total of 13 dance companies appeared—Baryshnikov led applause of special thanks for Jerome Robbins, the evening's artistic coordinator. Then he applauded his own announcement that the event's \$1.4-million goal had been reached by curtain time. (The money has been earmarked to support AIDS-related education and care in the United States.)

The 14-part program went off

with a smoothness befitting its million-dollar pedigree. American Ballet Theatre had the monopoly on novelty when it performed a preview of what will be a world premiere next spring: a ballet by modern dance *Wunderkind* Mark Morris set to piano etudes by Virgil Thomson.

Morris' "Drink to Me Only With Thine Eyes" contained further novelty by presenting, amid its cast of 10, Baryshnikov himself in his first full-fledged dancing appearance locally in more than a year.

A serious yet playful set of dance etudes, Morris' work is only about half complete but already has an invigorating personality emanating from its team spirit, energy and its leading team members.

The sentimental favorite of the night was the most sentimental of the program's excerpts—a male duet from Lar Lubovitch's "Concerto Six-Twenty-Two." Besides showing the AIDS-aware audience

an example of man-to-man sympathy and support, the work was a reminder that the concept of the event started with Lubovitch some three years ago.

Twyla Tharp gave extra impact to her company's performance of excerpts from her "Eight Jelly Rolls" by returning to the stage after a four-year retirement. There was a halo of silver to her hair and a slight increase of density to her physique, but otherwise she was her remarkable self—elastically stretched, diabolically quick and unendingly witty.

Of the eight companies that had not previously been seen on the State Theater's fine dance stage, the Merce Cunningham ensemble seized the occasion most beautifully and, with an eager but simple performance of a section from "Fabrications," appeared to have been let loose in heaven.

Performing back to back under a "Dancing to Bach" rubric, the Mark

Morris Dance Group, Dance Theatre of Harlem and the Paul Taylor Dance Company likewise used their time in this unfamiliar space to perform generously and happily.

The Laura Dean Dancers and Musicians had the unenviable task of opening the program but made a good effect, enhanced by the agreeable stage. Feld Ballet also looked thrilled to be spreading out on a stage larger than its usual one.

The Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater and the Joffrey Ballet presented a solo and a duet, respectively, and gave the evening some valuable variance in scale. The Martha Graham Dance Company danced eagerly but not, alas, accurately on the eve of its own local season and, with the exception of the ever-remarkable Kyra Nichols, the New York City Ballet, which is now not in season, pres-

ented a not-in-shape view of itself.

For a finale, the evening's four major companies combined forces in the last movement of George Balanchine's "Symphony in C." A game Susan Jaffe and a live-wire Ricardo Bustamante of Ballet Theatre led off, preceding a lovely Leslie Carothers and an elegant Ashley Wheeler of the Joffrey, followed by a hard-working (and in-shape) Merrill Ashley and a forthright Jock Soto of City Ballet, then a demure Virginia Johnson and an eager Donald Williams from Dance Theatre of Harlem.

Before top-price ticket holders adjourned for dinner on the theater's promenade, there was applause everywhere: a standing ovation from the audience and participants standing, bowing and applauding onstage.

The American Foundation for AIDS Research, Gay Men's Health Crisis and the National AIDS Network were the evening's principal beneficiaries. Fourteen other organizations will also benefit.

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