

a dark eloquence, while the Frankfurt Ballet imparts a rough, almost visceral quality. Both styles are effective.

With its slap and grab, its cling and push away, and its wild desperation, *Love Songs* reaffirms the proximity of love and hate. And yet it adds no special layer of insight to the accompanying ballads sung by Dionne Warwick and Aretha Franklin. Instead, it hammers away at the futility of most love relationships and watches coldly as they end "Not with a bang but a whimper." But it also gives some of Forsythe's soloists, notably Elizabeth Corbett, Glen Tuggle, Jennifer Grissette, Leigh Matthews, Andrea Tallis, and particularly Stephen Galloway the opportunity to show what versatile artists they are. In fact, all of the Frankfurt Ballet's dancers are unique in their commitment to William Forsythe's dark dilemmas. They are also rather unique in the disparity of their appearance. It made them look both human and vulnerable as they shared in Forsythe's ingenious use of disharmony and his touching faith in classical order. Do they also sense the mystifying hollowness?

Doris Hering

**Mark Morris Dance Group  
Brooklyn Academy of Music  
May 17-22, 1988**

I did not find Mark Morris's newest work, *Strict Songs*, as wonderful as I had hoped. But it doesn't matter. Any mind that can conceive of a dance dedicated to Liberace, set to songs by Lou Harrison, which are based on Hopi Indian chants and sung by thirty-two members of the New York City Gay Men's Chorus, leaves me breathless. Morris is only thirty-one years old, he has made more than fifty dances, and he is allowed a few little lemons.

*Strict Songs* is not strictly a failure, when compared to other choreographers' creations. But when compared to the standards of excellence Morris has set for himself with his own works, it simply doesn't come up to snuff. Because Morris works from the music and keeps the dance true to it, I think he was in trouble from the beginning. The sprawling sensibility of the movement echoed the incoherence of the music, with its uneasy mix of dense choral song style intoning songs that are better heard when wailed. Usually Morris's musical choices are elegant (even when nasty-funky, like his *Lovey*, set to the Violent Femmes). This time, however, choosing Harrison might have been a great idea, but in performance it didn't come off.

Because he had big sounds to fill with dancing, Morris splayed motion across BAM's huge space. Intimations of rituals are contained in the repeated formalities

of circles and lines, the use of more unison dancing than usual. At the beginning of the piece, he exploited the width of BAM's proscenium by having his dancers enter and exit rapidly, flinging them across the stage in wild, bucking leaps. Wiry and wonderful Keith Sabado shoots across our vision like an airborne satyr, hunched over in midair in an impossibly difficult shape, followed by Donald Mouton doing stag leaps, then the rest of the company in dizzying succession.

After this energetic section, soft groupings cluster in ever-shifting constellations, men partnering men; women, women. There are few solos, and when the company forms a circle, they twine their limbs, weaving baskets with interlocking legs and arms. In another surprising part, they do strange slow stretches, standing with one leg tucked in a high passé, or a yoga position. Apparently this one-legged dance was choreographed when Morris was suffering from a broken foot.

Looking back, *Strict Songs* slips away a mirage that barely shimmers on the horizon of memory. What remains clear is the audacity of the idea. Daring is something we have come to expect from Morris. Usually he can find the formal structures to contain ideas, no matter how reckless, how grand. This time, the idea outstripped the movement. In the long run, it makes little difference. If—and when—*Strict Songs* is recalled, it will be held up as an example of a dance that didn't make it, remembered only because this is a choreographer who makes so few mistakes.

Sally Sommer

**DanceAfrica '88  
Brooklyn Academy of Music Opera House  
June 4-5, 1988**

DanceAfrica, the annual festival of African-American dance, marked the beginning of its second decade by featuring, for the first time, a native African company. Les Guirivoires, from the Côte d'Ivoire, under the direction of Rose Marie Guiraud, made its American debut and proved to be the highlight of a very satisfying program.

The troupe of very young dancers and musicians, including a thoroughly professional nine-year-old drummer named Thomas Guei, performed with energy and enthusiasm, but it was founder/director Guiraud who dominated the stage with her charisma and charming accent. An actress and singer as well as a dancer, Guiraud has a sense of theatricality that was most apparent when she shed an extremely modest gown to reveal a stunning body in a rather daring outfit of the type favored by the late Josephine Baker.

(see NYC REVIEWS, page 34)