

# The Superb Mark Morris



The Mark Morris Dance Group

by Dale Reynolds

**T**hat gay men are big into the dance world is hardly a revelation. But that leaders of international dance troupes are openly gay, and use that sexual orientation in their works, is relatively new. Mark Morris was here at the end of October for two shows at UCLA's Royce Hall. For those of you who missed him, or have only seen him on PBS' "Dance in America," you owe it to yourselves to see him when next he comes.

Morris, a late-20s, medium-size, intense and attractive dancer/choreographer, makes his gay-awareness part of the action, thereby making it political, but not, I think, polemical. He allows, but doesn't emphasize, same-sex partnering in ways that older gay choreographers couldn't allow themselves to do. The humor, wit, fun, silliness enhance his total work. The fact that he keeps coming back to gay makes it all the more exciting for the vast majority of gay audiences.

First and foremost of course, is the fact that he is a terrific choreographer. His

feeling for the emotional underpinning is clear, crisp and revealing and the fact that he is willing to be so open about being gay makes a minority of his audience acutely uncomfortable, but even if they haven't a clue about what is happening to them, they

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are changing too. Morris is giving the issue exposure and that counts.

For the record, he performed "My Party," "Deck of Cards" (the funniest), Fantasy (music by Mozart), "One Charming Night" and "Marble Halls" (Bach). His world premiere of Fugue (Mozart) was not performed, unhappily. The corps is superb, highly trained and infected with the same sense of fun that he has. It was all so joyous and exuberant.

Morris will soon take over the spot that the Bejart Ballet had in Brussels. Wish him well and catch him on tour.

Francis

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