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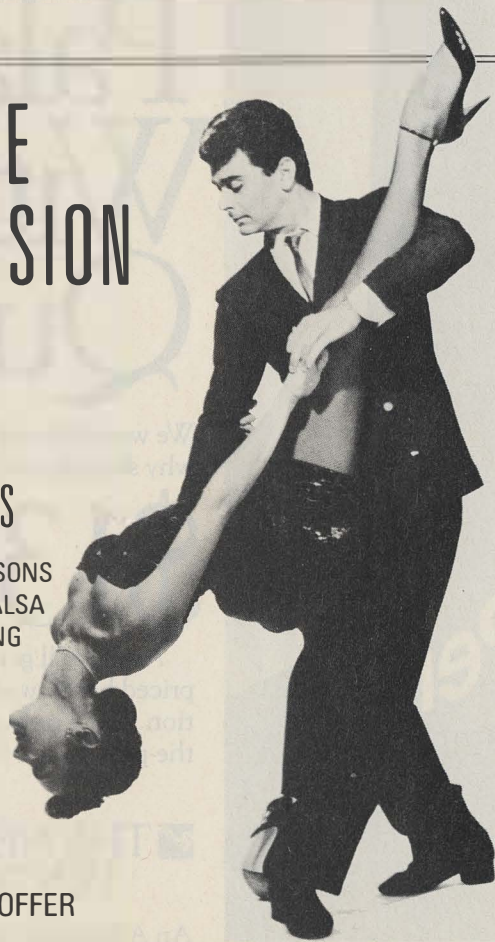
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THE YEAR HAS BEEN FULL OF PHYSICAL and aesthetic relocations. Twyla Tharp, once a renegade who was going to make everything new (she even scorned the idea of repertory), firmly embraced the Establishment, disbanding her company to join forces with American Ballet Theatre. At the same time, the modern-dance pioneer Martha Graham decided that the way to perk up her opening night was to have a Bolshoi ballerina dance, and encore, Fokine's perpetually dying *Swan*.

Meanwhile, Mark Morris, the best thing that's happened to American cho-



Baryshnikov and Kathleen Moore.

reography since Tharp, has moved his troupe to Brussels, where it is enjoying the use of several theaters and live music (including a chorus), year-round employment at decent wages, and other blandishments this country, with its meager government support for the arts, can't begin to provide. This is terrific for Morris, but his fans are hoping he'll return to do his work where we can see it on a regular basis—watch the growth, the crazy mistakes, the flashes of genius—not just have a quick biennial peek at a program of polished selections.

Some of the year's most arresting performances came from faraway times and places. Ernie Smith's compilation "Fascinating Rhythms: Black Traditions in Popu-

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lar Dance," screened in Film Forum 2's bountiful five-week dance series, presented Whitey's Lindy Hoppers—black teenagers from the forties who meshed a phenomenal technical facility with unfettered vigor and joy. If this dazzling ensemble were forming today, it might call itself Life Force. The Soviet Union couldn't do enough for us, lending a pair of young stars from both the Bolshoi and the Kirov to our Big Two. Nina Ananiashvili and Andris Liepa were guests of the New York City Ballet, while ABT got the more thrilling couple, Altyнай Assylmuratova and Farukh Ruzimatov. Not to be outdone, the Paris Opéra Ballet sent us nearly its entire school, complete with illustrious instructors, to demonstrate its touchingly pure understanding of the classical syllabus. And the Royal Danish Ballet brought us its unmatched mimes, dancers who begin this phase of their careers in early middle age and ripen in their art for some three decades more.

The customary exercise of identifying the best and worst new dances of the year is child's play this time out. Given the extent of their merit or lack thereof, the 1988 choices may prove to be the finest and most dismal of the entire decade. Top honors (including a private jet plying the Brussels-Lincoln Center route) go to Morris, for *Drink to Me Only With Thine Eyes*; upon receipt, Morris is modestly to thank his all-star no-star cast from ABT (including Mikhail Baryshnikov), who did him proud. The booby prize—an overflowing trash can topped by a pair of pointe shoes in flames—belongs to Robert Weiss, for *Archetypes*, the nadir of the New York City Ballet's American Music Festival and, perhaps, of the company's entire history.

Among the many losses in the year's toll were those of Robert Joffrey, the guiding spirit of the eclectic company that bears his name, and the English choreographer Frederick Ashton. One likes to think of them in Heaven, mingling with kindred spirits—Joffrey, perhaps, eagerly questioning Balanchine on some fine points of *Cotillon*, whose reconstruction he commissioned in his last illness; the atmospheric ballet was reputedly Ashton's favorite among Balanchine's works. One knows exactly how that corner of paradise will be landscaped. As Ashton wrote in connection with his enchanting *La Fille Mal Gardée*: "There exists in my imagination a life in the country of eternally late spring, a leafy pastorate of perpetual sunshine and the humming of bees—the suspended stillness of a Constable landscape of my beloved Suffolk, luminous and calm."