

Mark Morris vs. Brussels Press

By PAUL L. MONTGOMERY

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BRUSSELS, April 28 — The American choreographer Mark Morris is ending his first season in Brussels with the headline "Mark Morris Go Home" still echoing from the front page of the city's leading newspaper.

Mr. Morris arrived here last fall to ecstatic reviews as the successor to Maurice Béjart, the French dancer and choreographer who had ruled dance in Belgium for 27 years. By virtue of some unkind words about Mr. Béjart, a dance that ended with everyone on stage flamboyantly and completely naked and questions about what Mr. Morris was smoking in his cigarettes, the season ended this week with virtually the entire Belgian press lined up against the 32-year-old American.

Mr. Morris, who has been called the most important choreographer of the 1980's by critics like Arlene Croce of The New Yorker and Alastair Macaulay of The Financial Times, is un-

Choreographer is without support in the press or clothes onstage.

bowed. "Isn't it great!" he said of the mingled boos and cheers after his "Mythologies" trilogy closed on Sunday. "Quel scandale!"

Choreographer's Reaction

The Seattle-born artist faced a press conference yesterday at the Monnaie Theater about his first season in Brussels. He is the dance director at the theater, which is headed by Gérard Mortier. Mr. Mortier said that of the theater's \$25.6 million annual budget for opera, dance and concerts, about \$2 million went for Mr. Morris's company directly and a little more for subsidiary expenses. More than three-quarters of the theater budget comes from Government subsidies, with the rest made up by sponsors, admissions and renting scenery.

Mr. Morris told the assembled Belgian arts press that he found the latest reaction to his work "slightly xenophobic" after the early raves. He said he believed that artists should be free to put on work, and that artists should be free to criticize it.

"My personal truth is perhaps not popular with journalists, but it's better than making up lies so I can be popular," Mr. Morris told the journalists. "I'm a choreographer, you see, not a journalist. My work is what I have to say."

From Mild to Radical

Mr. Morris has done premieres of "L'Allegro, Il Penseroso ed Il Moderato" to music by Handel and "Dido and Aeneas" to music by Purcell as well as two compilations of previous work. The choreographer said he had purposely led up to his most radical work, "Mythologies," with milder precedents.

Mr. Morris has a three-year contract with the Monnaie and is planning his next season. He is to give benefit performances next month at the Dance Theater Workshop in New York City and a week of "Dido and Aeneas" in Boston. His 24-dancer company goes on to Montpellier, France; Spoleto, Italy, and Barcelona and Seville in Spain this summer and is to perform a full program in Brussels in the 1989-90 season.



Beatriz Schiller

Mark Morris, the American dance director of the Monnaie Theater in Brussels, is ending his first season there under a barrage of criticism.

Mr. Morris said he found the controversy over his dance thrilling. "What I try to do is clarify," he added. "It's just a show after all. It has a right to exist."

The reasons for the sudden turn against his work in Brussels are mysterious. Mr. Béjart, reportedly wounded by Mr. Morris's dismissive comments about his work, had the Lausanne Ballet Company, which he heads, subsidize a trip by Belgian critics to Switzerland to see his new

ballets. The two choreographers are poles apart: Mr. Morris's company dances barefoot in minimal costumes, Mr. Béjart's is on point in elaborate dress. The largely staid Brussels dance audience is unused to Mr. Morris.

Mr. Morris thinks there is also a problem with his open homosexuality. "Here it's O.K. to be homosexual if you wear a suit and have a firm handshake and don't give any trouble," he said. "I'm not like that."