

Limón Dance Company gives exquisite, powerful performance

By SUSAN BROILLI

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The Limón Dance Company's performance Thursday at the American Dance Festival demonstrated why it has survived and thrived 28 years after the death of founder José Limón.

The company gave an exquisite, powerful performance of Limón's classic "The Moor's Pavane" and also performed two works sympathetic with Limón's style and spirit.

Limón used the weight of the body along with telling gestures to communicate basic, human emotions with an economy that was poetic.

The ADF-commissioned world premiere of Mark Ham's "An Anatomy of Intent" offered a look at body language as contemporary and timeless. It began with a couple and their constant, somewhat mechanic movements punctuated with contact; they touched foreheads, placed a hand on the other's neck. The mechanical movements served to isolate and draw attention to different body parts and served as a warm-up for the rest of the dance.

Then, couples and singles filled the stage, sweeping it with eddies of movement. They rose, fell, humbled and lifted in a natural flow of simple beauty. In one moving sequence, a female dancer sat and cradled another female dancer in a comforting posture.

A more contemporary sequence showed a woman, with headset, listening to music on her portable CD player, moving to it as



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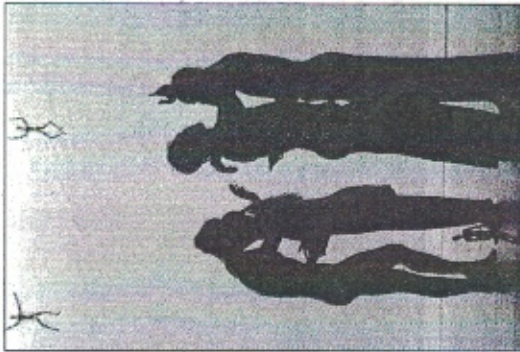
Dancers rehearse Thursday for Friday's world premiere of "An Anatomy of Intent." The performance offered a look at body language as contemporary and timeless.

she sang along: "Just a little bit." Her male partner did not move to the same music and finally pulled her offstage.

Carlos Orta, who resembles Limón, repeated an exit that showed strength and hope as well as fragility and doubt. He pointed one hand like a spear high above him while he held the other arm lower as his hand trembled like a cornered animal.

Michael Grigsby's music contributed greatly to the work. He performed his composition on piano with singing by soprano Lea Osborne. He communicated much with less: His running, repetitive rhythms conveyed a lush, emotional atmosphere.

Anthony Tudor's 1937 "Dark Elegies"



and ingenious uses of group, circular dancing. Tudor also included some folk dance steps as dancers linked arms and moved in a line.

The lighting became brighter with peach tones in a clouded sky backdrop as though after a storm in the resignation scene. One gesture, in particular, communicated this

coming to terms with grief and moving on with life as seated women used their hands in a gathering motion as though harvesting food.

The program ended with Limón's 1949

"The Moor's Pavane: Variations on the theme of Othello." And, what a way to end. Limón used the structure of a court dance as a "cage" to hold a "tiger" of emotion in this tale of deceit, jealousy and murder. The "civilized" restraint in the court dance made the base human actions more powerful in contrast.

Dancers Orta as The Moor, Jonathan Riedel as His Friend, Carla Maxwell as His Friend's Wife and Nina Watt as The Moor's Wife delivered a dramatic, emotional portrayal as a love of joy and harmony disintegrated into hate and destruction.

On viewing this dance for the third time, what stood out was the motivation behind the behavior of the couple played by Maxwell and Riedel. It's envy of the higher station of The Moor and his wife that prompts Maxwell to first pick up the wife's dropped handkerchief, a gift from her husband.

And, it's envy that leads Riedel to take the handkerchief and use it to convince the Moor that his wife has been unfaithful. The couple first revealed their jealousy by repeatedly pausing in their duet to watch The Moor and his wife dance.

The stricken look on the face of the Moor's wife as she knelt, her fists on both sides of her face conveyed her confusion when her loving husband became increasingly violent. He eventually kills her.

The Moor, having realized his wife's innocence, communicated his grief as he placed the handkerchief over his wife's chest and then covered her prone body with his, his hands cupped around her head.