

Jose Wilsh

REVIEWS

DANCE REVIEW

Inaugurating A Season With a Dose Of the Odd

By ANNA KISSELGOFF

Symphony Space, the enterprising Upper West Side performing-arts center that has been an occasional setting for dance, inaugurated what Isaiah Sheffer, its artistic director, called "our first full dance season" on Thursday night.

Twenty companies will be featured in three types of programs. The first, "Triple Play," featured the Limón Dance Company, Peggy Baker Dance Projects and Donald Byrd/The Group. Some of the pieces were commissioned by Symphony Space for the season, whose curator is Kay Cummings.

The choreographers on view have highly individual stamps, are well along in their careers and work out of the mainstream to the point of oddity. In this instance this was a virtue rather than a failing.

Mark Haim showed his typical depth in exploring movement with "An Anatomy of Intent," which the Limón company presented last summer in Durham, N.C., at the American Dance Festival. (The festival was co-commissioner of the piece.)

Although the work is open to interpretation, its emotional resonance is powerful at each moment. There is a strong link between music and dance, embodied by a vocalist, Kristin Plumley, who sang Schubert at



Richard Termine for The New York Times

Peggy Baker, with Andrew Burashko on piano, during "Triple Play" on Thursday at Symphony Space.

wordless vocalizing by the composer Michael Grigsby. Mr. Grigsby was at the piano onstage.

The piece nonetheless began in silence, with Amber Merkens and Jonathan Riedel engaged in stylized caresses that were later parodied. Nina Watt and Carla Maxwell were often seen as observers in stillness. But Natalie Desch and Zhen Jun Zhang joined the first couple in interlocking formations.

Mr. Haim's clustered bodies swatted, swiped, rolled and tumbled with slippery continuity. There was also room for a riveting solo for Ms. Watt, who snapped into separate poses cobbled together in unexpected

play with standing dolls on the floor. Costumes and rhythms changed. Raphaël Boumalla, witty and agile, performed essentially the same solo clothed and then in briefs. The performers danced their hearts out about something oblique, perhaps a search for happiness.

Ms. Baker, a Canadian whose supperlative dancing and clever choreography are well known in New York, started off with "A True Story." Her initial stamps, violent torso rotations and emphatic arm folding seemed like pure dance. Suddenly the gestures were imbued with dramatic meaning and illustrations of words spoken by the dancer.

Whatever meaning is changed by

text, movement from Ms. Baker is always an adventure to watch. Andrew Burashko, at the piano, played John Cage for the next two solos, "In a Landscape" and "Furthermore," which drew Ms. Baker toward the pianist until she enclosed him from behind in a touching embrace.

Mr. Byrd gave John Adams's music, "John's Book of Alleged Dances," a vivid exuberance in a premiere, "Alleged Dances." Olivia Bowman, Alexandra Damiani, Thaddeus Davis and Jamal Story took to the choreography's zigzagging bodies, swagger, spins, kicks and lurching leaps as if they would never stop. The piece was overlong, but the outpouring energy was terrific.