REVIEWS

Dance Magazine is committed to covering as large a number and range of dance events as space and time allow. To do this effectively, the magazine must receive written notice (directed to the Review Coordinator, Dance Magazine, 10 Columbus Circle, New York, N.Y. 10019) by the 10th of a given month for performances scheduled to take place in the period beginning the 16th of that month and ending the 16th of the following month.

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MARY HARTMAN, MARY HARTMAN
by Robb Baker

Will Tom and Mary be able to work things out, even with the help of the sex counselor and STET, or is Mary going to go off with the sexy blond policeman who's engaged to her sister Kathy? Is Loretta's career as a country-western singer finished because of her unintentional anti-Semitic remark on "Dinah"? Did David break an unwrtten Grand Union rule by bringing his real wife to perform with the group? Why was Barbara so moody throughout the series? How angry did Doug really get the night the other dancers started making fun of the painting he brought to the performance? Can this marriage be saved?

Eavesdropping on private lives (or what we imagine to be private lives) has long been the determining appeal of soap opera, and the principle operates every bit as much at a **Grand Union** concert as it does in television's "Mary Hartman, Mary Hartman," which uses the whole "reality"-as-entertainment sensibility as its continuing source of humor. The Grand Union dancers have set themselves up as public personnae living out the very private act of creation by improvising in public. The characters onstage have the same names as the dancers themselves, but are they really the same? Probably not, usually, but it doesn't really matter, any more than it does in any soap opera. It's the situation we're eavesdropping on, not the individuals, and the real fascination is in how we can apply the trials and errors to our own lives. And since the Grand Union personnae are sophisticated and intelligent, very hip to contemporary aesthetics, their popular appeal is particularly to other dancers, painters, sculptors and musicians, who prefer their soap opera on a loftier plane.

As in real life (or indeed "Mary Hartman, Mary Hartman"), not everything works in a Grand Union performance, and some nights everything seems to go wrong at

once. The group played for four nights in mid-April at the LaMama Annex, and the two middle evenings pretty much failed to catch fire, though opening night and closing night were spectacularly successful.

The LaMama performances were done without Trisha Brown and Steve Paxton (former mainstays of the group) and featured Barbara Dilley, Douglas Dunn, David Gordon and Nancy Lewis, along with Valda Setterfield, a former Cunningham dancer who had been listed as "guest artist" in ads for the series but was simply one of the cast in the printed programs. Setterfield fit in nicely with the group, moving particularly well when she danced with the other two women (with whose styles hers contrasted quite interestingly), though on the whole she and Gordon (her husband) tended to rely a bit too much on working together.

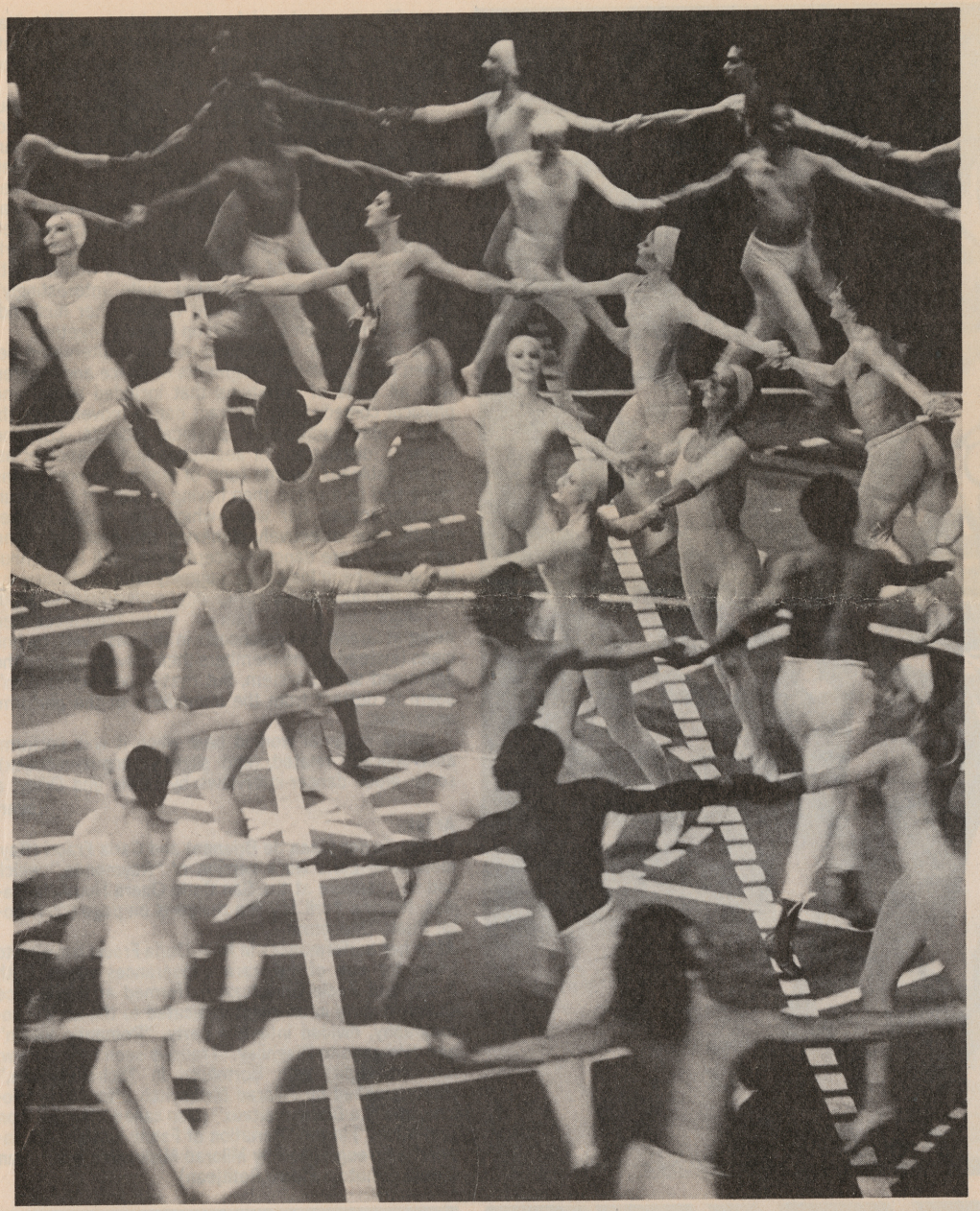
As always, the improvised evenings alternated between (and combined) segments of dance and theater, with all sorts of variations that included verbal and physical comedy bits, abstract dance movement, athletics, manipulation of physical objects, costume changes, discussions of aesthetics and creation of assorted tableaux vivants (one of which featured Lewis being tied to a cross, then having a piece of grapefruit casually tossed her way—which she caught in her mouth, thus effectively climaxing the evening). Dunn and Lewis were dancing exceptionally well throughout the series, he in his quirky, jaggedly unpredictable way, she in her fluid, stream-of-(kooky)-consciousness style.

Things were a little "fancier" than I remember their being at Grand Union concerts in the past, with technicians (instead of the members themselves) running the lights and sound system, but these coordinates didn't seem to detract from the immediacy of the performance itself.

Verbal material worked best when it was performance-concept related (and slightly tongue-in-cheek): some mock dancer-interviews by Lewis and Dilley; a

(over)

At left:
Burton Taylor (Jean de Brienne) and Carla Fracci (Raymonda) in Loris Gai's version of "Raymonda," which had its premiere at the San Carlo Opera House in Naples, Italy on April 10. The review is on page 82. (Photo: Paolo Buonomo)
After her performances in Italy, Carla Fracci traveled to Paris for one of her rare appearances there. Both Fracci and Paolo Bortoluzzi performed at the Espace Cardin in June in an event dedicated to the art of choreography, divided into two parts: "Romantic Vision" and "Homage to Diaghilev." Fracci is seen here (below, left and right) with Bortoluzzi in "Schéhérazade," choreographed by Milorad Miskovitch after Michel Fokine, and "Le Diable Boiteux" (also called "The Devil on Two Sticks") in the "Variation of Fanny Elssler and Mazilier" choreographed by Milorad Miskovitch after Jean Coralli. (Photos: Pierre Petitjean)



REVIEWS (Cont'd)

rapid-monologue soliloquy by Setterfield (with over tones of Ronee Blakley's onstage breakdown scene i "Nashville"); Dilley's telling Lewis, "They'll never be lieve we're just making this up" and Lewis' quick reply "Oh, I think they will"; and Gordon's asking the audi ence at one point, "Which would you vote for, this a material or that as material?" (referring to two un related movement bits going on simultaneously).

Gordon also handled one tense moment, when an au dience member made an attempt to participate in th onstage action (always a possibility/threat in im provised performance) with cool aplomb by snappin back, "Would you like to be brought out here or ig nored?" But the real moment of tension was betwee the Grand Union members themselves, on the thir night, in the performance to which Dunn had brought painting to the theater and had hung it at one end of th performing space. "This painting is by Deborah Frie man," he announced about half-way through the eve ning. Gordon and Setterfield immediately carried out rubber mat and held it up to the audience, stating, "Thi painting is by Arnold Friedman," which elicited a prett good laugh. But when Gordon then donned a serap and said, "This painting is by José Friedman," the en suing laughter was a good deal more restrained. didn't think we brought things to performance for th approval of other people," said Dunn, and Dilley, tryin to smooth things over, joked, "It's getting a little com petitive here, isn't it?" Gordon quickly countered wit "What does that mean? You can't get away with tha stuff any more?"—which seemed to bring past ten sions and under-the-surface hostilities into play. Thing worked themselves out in the repartee that followe and by the time Dilley asked Gordon, "What woul make you feel better?" and he replied, "Complete exo eration," everyone seemed to have pretty much r gained his sense of humor. But for a few momen there was real-life soap opera in the air, and Dun seemed perfectly serious a few minutes later when h acknowledged that the moment had passed but that had made his hair stand on end.

Douglas Dunn himself gave a performance the pr vious weekend (April 18) at the Cunningham Stud (there were also two performances in Trisha Brown loft). Working with eight other dancers, he called th piece "Lazy Madge," a title which by its very sound ca tures the curious mixture of casualness and abruptne that characterizes Dunn's style.

The piece (described as an "ongoing choreograph project") began with a solo by Dunn, dressed casually yellow slacks, red shirt and belt, ochre socks and tenn shoes. The movement was full of athletic feints, benc crosses, jerks, shifts and hops, ending with Dunn lyi on his side, facing the audience to announce the nam of the other dancers. He rolled over a couple of tim and rose, tried out a few more poses (and the "tried ou is significant), then quietly strolled to the sidelines.

The eight dancers then performed, sometimes alon sometimes in groups of two or three (either with without Dunn). One was constantly aware of counte pointing, of how this angle or pose or action was co trapuntal to that one, of relationships or contrasts b tween duets and trios, then within those duets or tric then (finally) within a dancer's own body (especia with Dunn himself, who sometimes seems to ha about a dozen different energies and rhythms going at once inside of him).

Throughout there was the overall contrast of leisur ly "dancerly" movement with athletic "natural" mov ment. A lot of the latter was floor-based—scootin rolling, moving like a lobster or crab. Two of the wom did a leaning duet, and Dunn performed a balancing with Ellen Webb which was quite nice.

Near the end, Daniel Press did the same solo th

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Top:
Diane Gray-Cullert is seen at the center of four conce tric circles in the concluding section of Béjar "Beethoven's Ninth Symphony," performed at W Trap in June. A review appears on page 75. (Pho Norma McLain Stoop)

Bottom:
(left to right) Angela Caponigio, Luis Gonzales, Mar Arsin, Naaz Hosseini. Erin Matthiessen and Christi Lindahl rotate as they revolve about the space in Lau Dean's new work "Song," which was performed in Ap at the Brooklyn Academy of Music. A review is on pa 32. (Photo: Lois Greenfield)