

Fort Worth picks up avante-garde dance

By JOHN BRANCH

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It's often necessary to cross the Trinity to find out what's going on in contemporary dance. The Fort Worth Ballet season usually includes visits by a couple of the more orthodox companies, and the Fort Worth Art

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Museum presents a handful of appearances every year by various avant-garde dancers. The avant-garde trends in dance remain difficult to grapple with, despite these occasional glimpses, because nobody in Dallas or Fort Worth seems to be working in the territory that's been opened up by the visiting companies. Consequently, the performances last weekend by David Gordon/Pick Up Co. were a bit baffling. But the program, which was sponsored by the Fort Worth Art Museum in the Scott Theatre, was also enormously refreshing.

Gordon is one of the leaders in what's known as the post-modern movement in dance. It's easy enough to discover, if you read the right books and magazines, most of the principles behind post-modern dance, but seeing how they work in practice is a little like having someone tell you how to ride a bicycle before you actually try it: somehow the feeling isn't at all what you expected. For instance, the fact that some of the post-modernists like to incorporate language into their performances doesn't prepare you for the elaborate and witty developments of one of Gordon's game-like pieces (since most of the works on the program were dovetailed together, I wasn't sure which one was which, but I think I'm thinking of "Double Identity").

It begins with three dancers lined up one next to another facing front, and they announce who they are and who they are representing in the lineup; thus, at the start, they are "Susan as Susan," "Keith as Keith," "Margaret as Margaret." After a brief drill-team sort of shuffling around, they

stop in line but with their order changed, and announce "Margaret as Susan," "Susan as Keith," "Keith as Margaret." This goes on awhile (it's somehow very funny, despite how it sounds), and then the dance changes strategies; one of them lies on the floor and says "Susan as bread," another lies on top of her and says "Keith as meat," and then we have "Margaret as bread," thus making a sandwich. This all happens almost faster than you can follow, and in the space of 10 or 15 minutes they've become all sorts of wacky things, ending, as I recall, with an enormous confusion: "Susan as Margaret as Keith as Susan as Margaret" and so forth.

The rest of the program is less easy to describe, but the most likely prospect is "What Happened." It begins with a taped rendition of a car crash, and then the four performers begin telling different stories of what led up to the crash, acting out various key words such as "which" (a long nose, a swooping gesture and a cackle), "grandfather" (drawing the outlines of a big clock) and "struck" (a slap on the face). Some of the works utilized movement that was more dance-oriented, in a broad sense, than these two, but on the whole the program was almost completely unconventional and not at all forbidding.

The Krassovska Ballet Jeunesse of Dallas gave a big, varied program Sunday afternoon which I was only able to see two-thirds of. The most impressive work was the entire second act of "Giselle," which featured guest artists Soili Arvola in the title role and Leo Ahonen as Albrecht. The Krassovska company is entirely at home in this work; their wonderfully soft, downy gestures have been transmitted to the dancers through company artistic director Nathalie Krassovska, who got them more or less direct from their source in the Russian romantic tradition. This is a pleasant enough thing to see in itself, since it's not a part of most American ballet training, but an additional pleasure was seeing the same style in Arvola and Ahonen.



Avant-garde dancers David Gordon/Pick Up Co. in one of their unorthodox, witty pieces