

On the cover: Irek Mukhamedov, pictured here in costume for Yuri Grigorovich's *The Golden Age*, will be among the young dancers most prominently featured in the Bolshoi Ballet's upcoming American tour. The first American interview with Mukhamedov begins on page 58. Photograph by Peter Perazio.

Dancemagazine

APRIL 1987

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among other alternative sounds, player piano, xylophone, propeller, bass drum, and siren. The score wails iconoclasm, but without ever denying itself an accessible aural drive. The pulse is palpable and easily muscular, and Lubovitch latches onto it as the support system to sustain a series of equally dissonant and driven danced images.

They steer him right out onto Route Catch-22. Lubovitch has described *Blood* as a structured exploration of "anti-structure." The effort is admirable but, finally, as self-negating as the noncontentiousness in the Mozart is releasing. If this mere center cannot hold, it's because the center is merely not there, and *Blood* never congeals. For example, because everything and everyone operates in isolation, the calculation with which the dancers stalk, strike, and stroke themselves remains only individually chilling. It never develops either individual or communal pressure. The qualities of Lubovitch's sharply sketched imagery—all harshness and hard, hard edges—become literally frustrating, illustrative without illumination, and inevitably self-conscious. *Blood* cannot go anywhere because its point, finally, is that there's nowhere to go; theatrically speaking, it's a point that can be made once and then only repeated and repeated again. The void, we discover, cannot be danced, and even the Lubovitch ensemble's characteristic earnestness develops a then-why-bother pointlessness. Blood, after all, is meant to sustain life.

Otis Stuart

David Gordon/Pick Up Company
Brooklyn Academy of Music
November 19-22, 1986

What happened to David Gordon at the ballet? *Transparent Means for Travelling Light*, which opened his Pick Up Company's program at the Brooklyn Academy of Music, made me wonder if his stints as guest choreographer for American Ballet Theatre and Dance Theatre of Harlem had been a boost for him or a bust.

Having deliberately established a high-tech atmosphere by rising eerily from the orchestra pit surrounded by blazing television screens, Gordon immediately abandoned it for the spare landscape of a bare stage. There, he and seven of his ten dancers hurled themselves insistently at the steps and shapes of ballet, now tangling, hands clasped, in a knotty quartet, now shuffling in desultory bourrées. Couples of either sex lifted and manipulated each other; four men politely promenaded Valda Setterfield in battement and arabesque. At one point, Dean Moss grabbed a rising batten and floated off the floor, flailing gently as if captioned "Look, Ma, no gravity."

Repeatedly obscured by shifting curtains and light levels, the valiant dancers were ultimately wedged into an inescapably tight corner by pairs of descending drapes. Was working in the ballet a trap for Gordon? A (see NYC REVIEWS, page 34)

STEPS

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Evee Lynn
Peff Modelski
Lonne Moretton
Kirk Peterson
Zena Rommett
Roberta Senn
Michael Vernon
Douglas Wassell

Jazz:

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Natasha Baron
Fred Benjamin
Miguel Godreau
Anne Hodgkins
Michele Kadison
Victorio Korjhan
Joe Lanteri
Richard Levi
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Rita Charisse
Peter Gennaro
Ann Reinking

Stretch:

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Jean-Paul Mustone

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Mercedes Ellington
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(NYC REVIEWS, from page 29)

puzzle? Or some kind of exercise in expediency, a *Transparent Means for Travelling Light*? This piece hinted at all three and more.

My Folks seemed shorter and tighter than when I first saw it in London last year. The Eastern European references are now more sharply defined, both by movement that swings effectively from boisterous to plaintive with its klezmer music, and by black and peasant costumes that fairly shout "immigrant."

Gordon's diffident manner, eyes averted, arms half-raised and legs sketching as if he were marking, suits his melancholy solo ideally. Whether he is *davening*, humming, or ruminating, every gesture harks back to a fading past in a distant country. Setterfield's solo, a grave frolic of skips, hops, and chain steps, unreels like an embroidered ribbon, and a sturdy canonical quintet, all nose-swiping and brow-wiping, anchors Gordon's ancestral homage in a vision of hard work



Chris Ha

Boost or bust: The David Gordon/Pick Up Company BAM season raised questions about collaboration between modern dance choreographers and ballet.

proudly shared.

Lengths of striped cloth serve as slings, sails, and ships to which the dancers entrust their full weight: Thus ingenuity transports and sustains them and transforms old burdens into new banners.

Leaning heavily on our goodwill at its premiere, *The Seasons* chronicled the months' inevitable succession, but less through its movement than through musical signposts—"September Song," *Les Patineurs*, *Appalachian Spring*—and color-coded costumes, unitards layered with chiffon in pastel, then hot, then dry and burnt shades.

Legible and likable amidst the aimlessness were a languorous crowd of sunbathers roused to melting embraces, flurries of windblown chaîné turns, and a stately cortège progressing, friezelike, across frigid

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Photo: Lois Greenfield

shadows. More memorable still were Gordon and Setterfield, husband and wife, side by side, stepping in unison in a small circle, his eyes never leaving her. Since the piece began with her recorded voice saying, "I am growing old," and since we know she is a few years the elder, the personal reverberations of their intimacy suffused the duet with tenderness.

When he fell behind (or she outstripped him) and they became separated, he marked time in place while she advanced, accelerated, disappeared. Here was the best of Gordon—succinct, moving—in a few haunting moments.

Barbara Newman

**Mark Morris Dance Group
Brooklyn Academy of Music
November 12-15, 1986**

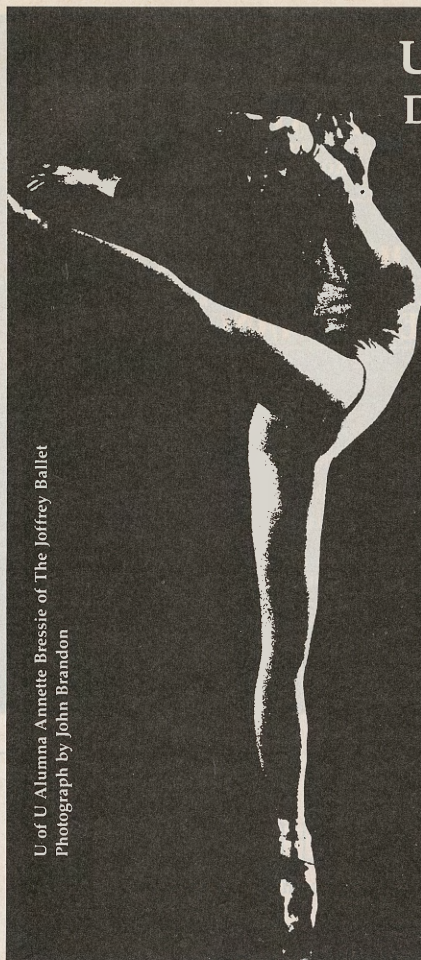
The Mark Morris backlash is under way, and as if to abet it Morris is now making dances of immense rigor, dances that you have to see twice. The featured item of his brief season at BAM's Next Wave Festival, *Stabat Mater*, to Pergolesi's hymn, was a plain but difficult work of severe religious feeling. Morris has taken on religious themes before (e.g., *Gloria*), and he is famous for his prayerful little bows at curtain calls and for thanking "god," along with his mother, in his program notes. But in *Stabat Mater*, unlike those other examples, there is nothing adorable, not a trace of the pantheistic feeling or Zen chic of the sixties. It is, you would have to say, a Roman Catholic dance, about the thing that its music is about—suffering, specifically the suffering of the Virgin Mary upon seeing her son nailed on a cross—and it has in it all the gravity, the sheer weight of agony, of Baroque painters' treatments of this theme.

At the same time, it is thoroughly contemporary. The language of faith is made rude. All the emotions are there: humility, wonder, yearning, betrayal, grief. But humility, for example, is a body seen from behind, with a hand hanging between the legs—something almost doglike. (Remember *Dogtown*.) Betrayal is one dancer dropping another as if he simply forgot he was holding him. The deposition is a body lifted upside down, stiff with rigor mortis, hard and heavy to carry. Grief is a face buried in another's abdomen. All these gestures are far more abstract than my description of them, and they are made more abstract still by repetition and recombination throughout the piece.

The dance is not just tough, but contained. It is relentlessly sectional, obedient to the music; it refuses to build with the "spontaneity" of stage emotion. Four dancers do a dance, and finish, and are replaced by four other dancers doing a dance. (Later, the groups grow to eight, and finally to twelve: a tidy times-four progression.) The stage too is contained. Drop curtains block off, first, about three-quarters of the stage, then about half, and only at the end yield the

(see NYC REVIEWS, page 36)

U of U Alumna Annette Bressie of The Joffrey Ballet
Photograph by John Brandon



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