

## The Dance

# Ballet Strips Away All Pretense

By Jean Battey

It is easier to tell what the dancers of "Concert of Dance Number Five" were against than what they were for. Their program at the America on Wheels skating rink last night, presented by the Washington Gallery of Modern Art, left every form of dance going on today with its foibles showing.



Mrs. Battey

The 14 dancers, who show a strong Merce Cunningham influence, have ostensibly stripped away pretense, sentimentality and symbolism from their movement. (They have also stripped away clothes, too, in one seminude duet that moves smoothly through a series of balletic movements.)

But if an irate choreographer of Martha Graham persuasion, for instance, were to turn the light of satire on

these dancers there would be little left to do—they have done it all themselves.

David Gordon, one of the group's choreographers, talks and moves his way through a "Prefabricated Dance" that is a devastating take-off on choreography classes, dance analysis and most of the isms of modern dance.

He tops this off with a superbly hilarious example of stage "personality," gazing at the audience with a vapid and ingratiating smile as he saunters by in battered top hat and tails—all this done against the background of "Over the Rainbow."

If someone wanted to do a take-off on these dancers he might conceive the idea of having a man and woman dressed in white coveralls roll and wrestle on the floor and end up by tying themselves together with rope—but Judith Dunn beat him to the draw last night with just that.

As playwright Robert Bolt has remarked, when the theater tries mainly to startle, it quickly exhausts its lode. After seeing dancers collide on stage, flex one foot an infinite number of times, tie each other up or suddenly shout, "Aaeewww," one's capacity to react to such stimuli dwindles.

In the theater of the absurd what begins with a heightened consciousness in the spectator can turn into a surfeit of the bizarre.

The dancers besides those mentioned, all of whom deserve mention for their high degree of competence, were Carolyn Brown, Trisha Brown, William Davis, Barbara Lloyd, Robert Morris, Steve Paxton, Yvonne Rainer, Albert Reid, Jennifer Tipton, Robert Rauschenberg, Valda Setterfield and Per Olaf Ultvedt.