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'United States' is propelled into a dazzling melting pot

■ **David Gordon/Pick Up Company**, "United States," 8 p.m. today and tomorrow, Meany Hall (\$9-\$15; 543-4880).

by **Carole Beers**
Times dance critic

A highlight of Seattle's dance year and the high point of its International Dance Week is the local debut of the David Gordon/Pick Up Company in Gordon's full-length "United States."

It wowed 'em at the Brooklyn Academy of Music's famous Next Wave Festival early this season, and it wowed 'em — what 'em there were, probably several hundred souls — last night at Seattle's Meany Hall.

The colorful, rich-textured panorama flows by with as much dreamy fascination as clouds through a Midwest sky, ranging from piled-up masses of dancers noodling about in Twyla-Tharpesque repetitions, inversions, mirror-images and so on, to isolated turns and duets that possess their own logic.

Surprises constantly emerge and sink back. Storms brew to toss folks about like rag dolls, then smooth out to silken, hand-holding numbers or Rockette-like kick lines. Square dancers reel about with cockeyed precision, wearing patches of calico atop denim atop

sailcloth. Pajama'd swingers slouch out bluesy tunes about San Francisco, about Hollywood musicals, about all that makes up this enormously simple and enormously complicated land.

Spoken text — weather reports, prose, interviews, with literal danced bits such as a pigeon walk, or a hand out to check for rain — alternates with fiddle tunes, classic and pop music that sometimes compliment, sometimes overwhelm the dance. But sometimes the dance overwhelms all else, including the dancers themselves.

These things, and everyday gestures, "real" runs and slides, weighted pirouettes and actual ballet positions and phrases combine in one enormous melting pot of movement, as sundry cultures commingle in the nation itself.

And that is just grand, as this so-called "work-in-progress," actually a series of finished pieces that are added or subtracted according to where this ever-changing troupe is performing, is supposed to reflect the United States, which of course changes, too.

Grants have been given by the presenters in different locales, so Gordon does a little something inspired by each area. Seattle's is a "Mount Rainier Reel" that looks lumberjacky and down-home earnest (It follows a spoken list of Nebraskans' names, and precedes a shuffling, hands-in-pockets "Waltzin' Across Texas.").