

‘Myth’ will move you

By LEIGH WITCHEL DANCE REVIEW

Modern dance legend Martha Graham was upstaged by her imitator Wednesday, when her company’s opening program paired two riffs on Greek mythology. There was one by Graham and one by Richard Move, who made his name with an act channeling her — and of the two, it was the imposter who shined.

Graham’s 1962 “Phaedra” — about the mythological queen’s illicit passion for her stepson, Hippolytus — opens with a startling tableau: Blakeley White-McGuire lying on a slanted settee, clenching her stomach and lifting her leg up as if she were having sex.

The end of the dance is even blunter, and still a little shocking.



Photo by Paula Court

It isn't a stretch to say 19-year-old Lloyd Mayor, making his New York debut, is very impressive in "The Show (Achilles Heels)."

Slathered throughout are lust and beefcake. Hippolytus wears nothing but sparkly black briefs and low body fat. We first see him inside a cabinet with small doors that expose parts of his body like a magician's illusion — or cuts of meat.

Yet with so many people clutching knives or their bellies, there isn't much to move you.

But then there's the Move piece. Made in 2002 for Mikhail Baryshnikov, "The Show (Achilles Heels)" is an hourlong fantasy about the Trojan War hero, in which Achilles' heels are . . . shoes.

The dancing careens from ballet to vogueing, and there are so many cultural references — from 1940s movies to "Jeopardy" — they'll make your head spin.

In legend, Achilles was so beautiful that his mother hid him in a brothel. Nineteen-year-old Lloyd Mayor has the heroic task of taking on the role originally choreographed for Baryshnikov. He does astoundingly well — you'd never guess it was his New York debut. Whether posing like a muscleman or dancing in high heels, he has a magnetic star quality that busts gender lines.

The evocative recorded score is by Arto Lindsay and Blondie's Deborah Harry. There's a recorded narrative as well, with the dancers lip-syncing to the lines voiced by Baryshnikov and Harry.

There are also poignant notes amid the glitter, like the small windup birds, their wings slowly flapping, representing the characters' souls.

The myth's big theme — the choice between a long, undistinguished life or a short, glorious one — taps directly into drag's notions of beauty, stardom and death. Move makes that aesthetic universal, and does it so well that it can give you chills.