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DANCE REVIEW | 'RICHARD MOVE'

One of the Deadly Sins, and a Conundrum Too



Kevin Scarpin, front, and Kristen Joseph Irby in "Exquisite Corpse."

Julieta Cervantes for The New York Times

By John Rockwell
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Richard Move's past has been, to say the least, colorful. His present, on view at Dance Theater Workshop through Saturday, is fascinating, if not entirely fulfilling. His future would seem limitless.

Best known as a Martha Graham impersonator and a fixture on the gay club scene, Mr. Move has been gradually asserting himself as a choreographer. Calling whatever performing forces he works with MoveOpolis!, he has staged all manner of dance events, some sprawling and bizarre (16 Greco-Roman wrestlers in Lille, France), others more conventionally modern dancey, with terrific performers drawn from the New York dance world, including a clutch of current or former Graham company members and Blondie and Mikhail Baryshnikov.

His latest venture is a career showcase of his modern-dance choreography; he himself does not perform. The first half consists of a three-part dance for a woman and two men set to music of Verdi, interspersed with two solos, "Lust" and "Dilemma." Then, after the intermission comes a half-hour new work, flamboyantly titled "Toward the Delights of the Exquisite Corpse."

What I mean by a limitless future but a not entirely fulfilling present is that while everything on this program bursts with mostly good ideas, his aesthetic hasn't quite cohered yet into an individual voice. But so much is compelling, and the dancers and other collaborators are so talented, one suspects that very soon Mr. Move will put together work to make us remember his Martha as a mere footnote.



Julietta Cervantes for The New York Times

Members of the MoveOpolis! dance troupe performing Richard Move's "Toward the Delights of the Exquisite Corpse" at Dance Theater Workshop

The strongest pieces on the current program are the two solos. "Lust" derives from a production of "The Seven Deadly Sins" first seen at Jacob's Pillow in 2001. It consists of the commanding Catherine Cabeen in slow, controlled poses, glacial yet remarkably difficult to sustain in their stretched, balanced, twisted positions. Ms. Cabeen, dressed in a striking unitard by Pilar Limosner and accompanied by insistent club music from DJ Savage, looks like a goddess caught between ecstasy and terrible vengeance, frozen into a statue. The solo ends with her hands splayed and shaking and her mouth open in a silent scream.

"Dilemma" is from an opera, "Arjuna's Dilemma," first performed in 2003. Set to husky, evocative vocal music by Cheb Khaled, it offers the powerful, sexy Miguel Anaya, in jeans with a bare torso. Starkly illuminated from above (Donalee Katz did the lighting), he struts and runs and contorts his torso, arms and hands. The effect is seductive and scary.

The three parts of "Verdi Divertimento," from 2004, use music from "Aida," "Don Carlo" and "Un Ballo in Maschera." To me this is less persuasive, if only because the power of music makes the relatively neat and clean choreography look small-scaled. It is strongly danced by Kristen Joseph Irby, Blakeley White McGuire and Kevin Scarpin.

All the dancers except for Mr. Anaya return for the new work. This ambitious construction blends their talents with the music and voice of the Minimalist composer Julius Eastman, who died in 1990, as mixed (with a song by the Crystals) by Hilton Als. There is a video by Charles Atlas of mostly patterns through which faces and birds and cityscapes emerge, and striking, reddish-orange snakeskin unitard costumes by Patricia Field with David Dalrymple.

For this Mr. Move concocts choreography that extends to solos and duets but mostly involves hieratic, spinning patterns, reminiscent of Laura Dean. There are intimations of masochism ("He hit me, but it felt like kisses") and sadism (a blindfolded man brusquely manipulated by a woman). But the prevailing impression is of a formalism not completely congruent with the flamboyance of the performers and décor and Mr. Move's wilder dance fantasies. When he gets it all together, his dances should be really something.

Richard Move/MoveOpolis! continues through Saturday at Dance Theater Workshop, 219 West 19th Street, Chelsea, (212) 924-0077, dtw.org.