

SCULPTURE & SCOOTING

By Deborah Jowett

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I was intrigued by a concert of Rudy Perez's works presented by Judson Dance Theatre. He makes dances like primary structures. In fact, his whole approach to dance has sculptural, even painterly facets. His pieces are short, stark, pristine – conveyed in strong, clear strokes and unshaded colors. He appears preoccupied with the element of design in dance, more than in, say, rhythm.

There is not a great deal of movement in Perez's works, but there is tremendous – sometimes oppressive – tension in the straight-lined poses and deliberate progressions. Often, there's something almost block-like in the way he uses bodies. A movement, because of the slowness with which it unfolds out of no-movement, or because of the number of times it is done, seems being carefully nailed to your retina. While you're seeing it, you're convinced you'll never forget it. Costumes, lights seem chosen for the same direct, bright visual effect, and the whole program – fittingly enough – began with a showing of some nice slides of New York and surrounding countryside by Allan Robertson. Nature immobilized for a split second.

Perez presents his dances as if they were some sort of very clean, controlled rites. The dancers are cool, but highly strung. Anthony LaGiglia's wiry sternness is a nice contrast to Perez's own more heavily muscled way of moving. Barbara Roan is a very good dancer; she controls her limber, stretchy body without any ugly tensions or performance mannerisms. She also has one of those faces that would probably carry even in Madison Square Garden – sort of a pretty Barbara Streisand.

I'd also seen the solo, "Center Break," before at Dance Theatre Workshop, but the rest of the program was new to me. Some of the dances, like "Center Break," have an odd pathos about them. For

instance, “Countdown,” in which Perez mostly sat, rose, smoked (with or without cigarettes), looked upward while one of the lovely Auvergne folk songs accents his stillness. Or “Fieldgoal” which ended with Perez – dressed like a gaudy scarecrow Harlequin – running wildly and awkwardly in place.

Some of his dances are funny. Take, for instance, Anthony LaGiglia striding about, hefting and displaying a large pole, to an accompaniment of the voice of Julia Child extolling the virtues of asparagus properly cooked. However, this dance, “Bang Bang,” didn’t seem fully realized (whatever that means). I really enjoyed watching Roan and LaGiglia in “Take Your Alligator With You” going through a life that considered of a series of magazine ad poses of incredible banality. When you see that many of these poses all together, you realize more than ever what phony aspects of the male-female relationship the ads play upon – may even have created, as a matter of fact. A photographer next to me had a ball clicking her little shutter; it must have seemed to good to be true – getting so many nice shots at a dance concert.

The other two dances on the program were “Offprint” – billed as a work-in-progress - and “Rerun Plus,” a solo for Miss Roan. “Offprint” made me interested in seeing the final work, and “Rerun Plus” showed a girl doing some tiring athletics, registering posed consternation, approval, etc. at what she had done, doing the whole thing a second time, and starting it a third. Nice, and beautifully performed.

I get all kinds of visions of my own from Perez’s work, because of the pent-up muscularity; people so tied up they can’t move, people who won’t move, rather than move dishonestly, people who tire themselves moving in a rat-race, people trapped into conventional patterns of movement. Dance is usually so actual; it’s odd and interesting to see a dance concert in which movement is mostly an agonizing potential.