

Arts & Entertainment

Webb's modern dance is earthbound

interview by Rosa Jackson

Brian Webb may not be walking on water in his upcoming dance show, but do expect to see him dancing on broken glass. "Scary, yeah?", he says of this feat. "Me and Iggy Pop, we do the same thing. But I'm not as old as he is; at least, not quite."

Now in his mid-thirties, Webb is no newcomer to modern dance. This season marks the tenth anniversary of the Brian Webb Dance Company, and he will be celebrating this with a new solo show. In previous years, the company has consisted of up to eleven dancers, but it is "going to stay a solo company for at least the next while," says Webb. "I really like working solo. I'm forced to explore myself."

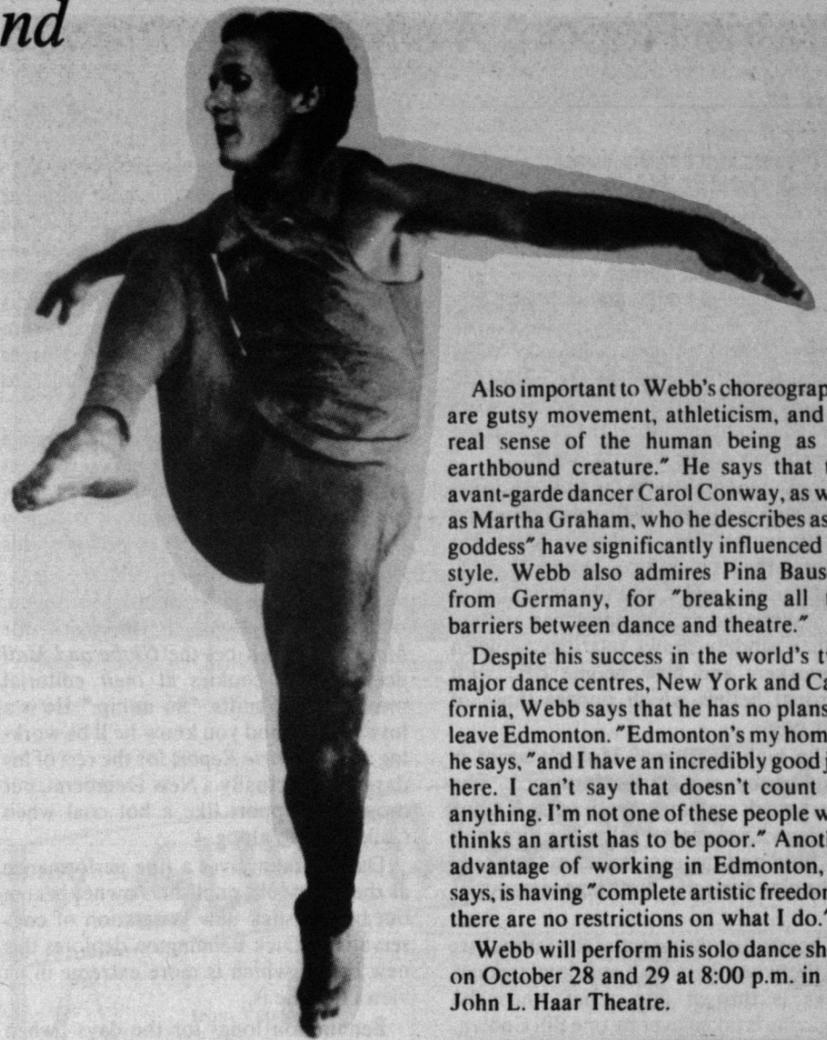
While Webb will be the only dancer in the show, he says proudly that it "involves many artists... all the work is original." The music is by Edmonton composer George Arasimowicz, and there will be visual art by sculptor Blair Brennar. Brennar is responsible for the glass on stage. Webb describes the sculptor's work as "large sheets on the floor of broken glass with sculptural elements on them."

Obviously, Webb is not afraid to take on a challenge. "I always take the bull by the horns," he affirms. This approach is

evident not only in his dancing, but also in his teaching. "I'm demanding. I don't let people muck about in my classes; I try to be on people's cases all the time." In his classes at Grant MacEwan, he emphasizes discipline. "I believe that dance class is where you learn to control your body, not let your body control you."

Webb's own daily regime is a strict one. Besides teaching 19½ hours a week, he practices the Pilates technique, a type of calisthenics which resembles yoga, every day. He is one of only three in Canada who teach this technique, which he says is "a huge strength and flexibility builder... there are a lot of different contortions, but you're always moving."

Thanks to his background in acting, Webb emphasizes theatricality as much as physicality in his dancing. He discovered modern dance while acquiring his BFA degree in drama at the University of Alberta in the early '70s, and "found it more rewarding than theatre." For most of the '70s, he studied dance at the Eric Hawkins School of Dance in New York, and following this he took an MFA degree in choreography at the California Institute of Fine Arts. Webb says of his dances that they "all have stories to them... they're psychological character studies."



Also important to Webb's choreography are gutsy movement, athleticism, and "a real sense of the human being as an earthbound creature." He says that the avant-garde dancer Carol Conway, as well as Martha Graham, who he describes as "a goddess" have significantly influenced his style. Webb also admires Pina Bausch, from Germany, for "breaking all the barriers between dance and theatre."

Despite his success in the world's two major dance centres, New York and California, Webb says that he has no plans to leave Edmonton. "Edmonton's my home," he says, "and I have an incredibly good job here. I can't say that doesn't count for anything. I'm not one of these people who thinks an artist has to be poor." Another advantage of working in Edmonton, he says, is having "complete artistic freedom... there are no restrictions on what I do."

Webb will perform his solo dance show on October 28 and 29 at 8:00 p.m. in the John L. Haar Theatre.

Forsyth on new CMC recording

by Mike Spindloe

The Canadian Music Centre held a reception and lunch last Friday at the U of A Faculty Club to celebrate the release of three new titles in their compact disc and cassette catalogue. The occasion was held there due to the inclusion of a piece by U of A professor and well-known composer Malcolm Forsyth on one of the discs. Forsyth is the only Prairie composer represented on the three discs.

His contribution to *Masquerade* is a four part work entitled "Fanfare and Three Masquerades", scored for solo horn and wind nonet, instrumentation typical of the diversity of Forsyth's work. Also included on *Masquerade* are pieces by Toronto composers R. Murray Schafer

("Concerto for Harpsichord and Eight Wind Instruments") and Gary Kulesha ("Third Chamber Concerto").

The Canadian Music Centre is based in Toronto, with several regional branches including one in Calgary. They exist to promote the performance, preservation and recording of works by Canadian composers in the "serious" music field. Their projects include an extensive catalogue of recordings as well as a manuscript and published music archive as a source for performing groups. The Toronto branch numbers 10,000 Canadian works in its collection, while the Calgary branch has about 7,000.

For Forsyth, the release of *Masquerade* comes after a year of successes, including several premieres of new works and win-

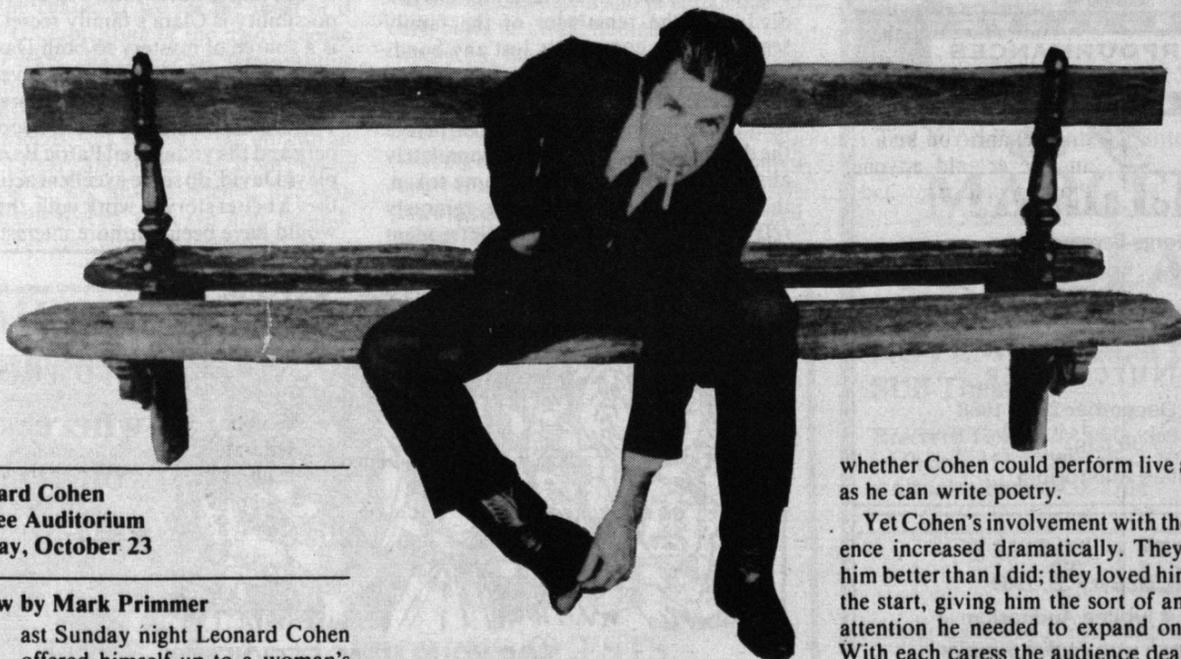
ning a Juno award for Best Classical Composition for his "Atayoskewin," a three movement suite for orchestra. Watch for an interview with Dr. Forsyth in *The Gateway* in November.

The CMC has also released two other discs, featuring all-Canadian works and performances. Their recording of Montreal's Orchestre Metropolitan includes works by John Rea, Michel Longtin, and Claude Vivier, while *Shadow Box* features mostly solo performances, as well as the Toronto Percussion Ensemble accompanied by Rosemarie Landry. With these three discs, the CMC has represented three major areas of composition: solo, chamber, and full orchestra.



The new CMC recording including works by Forsyth, Schafer and Kulesha.

Cohen puts on classy, potent show at Jube



Leonard Cohen
Jubilee Auditorium
Sunday, October 23

review by Mark Primmer

Last Sunday night Leonard Cohen offered himself up to a woman's caress: "I'm your man!" Cohen proclaimed. "I offer myself to-night!"

Most of the women in the audience were thoroughly tantalized by Cohen's offer (low, soft female moans seemed to permeate the air). The concert that followed, while far short on anything that might be termed raw physicality, was rich in caresses both spiritual and emotional

that both men and women could enjoy.

Beginning his concert much as he might a courtship with a woman, Cohen seemed both reserved and non-emotional, opening in a rather dry manner with the song, "Dance Me to the End of Love". In the song he sang, "Let me feel you moving like they do in Babylon..." and I thought, "Yes, let's see Leonard Cohen move," but his initial stage presence left me in doubt as to

whether Cohen could perform live as well as he can write poetry.

Yet Cohen's involvement with the audience increased dramatically. They knew him better than I did; they loved him from the start, giving him the sort of amorous attention he needed to expand on stage. With each caress the audience dealt him, Cohen became more personal, more sexual, and more passionate. Amid center stage, his legs set provocatively apart, Cohen twitched his knees so that his stylish, wide legged flannel pants pulsed rhythmically. This visual pulse may sound tacky, and yet it wasn't. Bearing in mind the reactions of the women around me, I felt that Cohen's power as a sexual icon was established.

That raises an interesting question: why

do women become so heated over the obviously over-the-hill Cohen? Surely the man is past his sexual prime, surely he has passed the age where he can croon effectively on stage? Cohen said that at the age of 15 he stumbled across the image of "the perfect arch of thighs" in the writing of the Spanish writer, Federico Garcia Lorca. In the song, "I'm your Man," Cohen pledges, "If you want a doctor, I'll examine every precious inch of you." Most definitely Cohen still possesses a sexual potency that has not waned with time. Interestingly enough, Cohen is also fatherly on stage. During instrumental breaks, Cohen stands before his musicians, listening and nodding, as if to say, "Yes, that's it! Great chord — I'm proud of you!" Combined with Cohen's references to us, "his children", Cohen's performance had an almost incestuous theme.

Among the songs which Cohen performed in this two and a half hour concert were: "I'm Your Man," "Dance Me to the End of Love," "Hallelujah," "Suzanne," and "The Tower of Song." Also performed were a number of Cohen songs that recently made the charts on Jennifer Warnes' 1986 album, *Famous Blue Raincoat*, the most recognizable of these being the ominous "First We Take Manhattan," sounding considerably different than Warnes' version. All in all, the Cohen concert was absolutely great. Anyone who missed him and his eight piece band might consider it worthwhile to check out any one of Cohen's records, novels or many books of poetry.