

Arts



Djanet Sears (above) shows us how, as a child, she used her father's jacket to pretend she had long hair.

Solo has lasting impression

By JENNIFER PARSONS

Africa Solo is the kind of play that can change the way you feel. Immediately following the performance you either want to get on a plane throwing caution and textbooks to the wind or, at the very least, run up and hug the lady that did. Djanet Sears, after her graduation from York, went to Africa by herself to find her "culture." She came back to write and perform the exhilarating *Africa Solo*, at the Factory Theatre Studio until November 29th.

Essentially a one-woman show, *Solo* is presented from the waiting lounge of the West Afrique airport where Sears is on student stand-by for her return trip home to Toronto. While waiting, Sears tells us a range of stories brought on by her efforts to avoid answering a phone call for which she is being paged.

The fact that one is not very interested in whether or not she picks the phone up is probably because the stories she tells to divert herself are so consuming. She talks about her childhood in England, about being the only black kid in her school, about coming to Canada, about her parents who are from Jamaica and Africa and how, because she has maintained status in each of the countries mentioned, she has ended up with four passports and an agonizing confusion about where she comes from.

But the play really starts to move when she tells the stories about her travels in the year she spent in Africa. The stories based on her trip are dynamic in that Sears goes into the hottest deserts and deepest jungles with a North American perspective. Her idea of giving a CityTV t-shirt to a native in the Masai encampment, to her reflections on Alberta winters while in the desert, make Sears not only endearing

(because she is so funny) but, awe-inspiring in that she has approached these adventures so nonchalantly.

One of the best instances of Sear's multi-cultural grab-bag is her story about travelling 28 km into the jungle to visit the Bambuti people (better known as the Pygmy's). Explaining that the Jamaicans have nothing over the Pygmies, Sears tells us about the after dinner pipe-passing and chant-session. Wanting to get involved in the singing, Sears starts chanting what she says is the only tribal song the "Tarzan" natives ever knew. When it was obvious that the Pygmy's weren't going for it, she decides to sing them something Canadian. Not surprisingly, "Oh Canada" doesn't go over too well either. But Sears then gets an idea and does the best version of "Oh Canada" this reporter has ever heard. She throws the marching rhythm out the door and, in the spirit of Ella Fitzgerald, transforms the national anthem into a blues number.

Africa Solo in fact, has a lot of music in it. Two musicians, Quamie Williams on percussion and Allen Booth on synthesizer, open the show singing an African song in harmony and remain on stage for the duration of the play providing the occasional line of dialogue, sound effects and the musical accompaniment to the many songs Sears sings during the show.

By the end of the show we find out that the person who is having her paged at the airport is an African man named Benoir. During the course of the play, Sears manages to create a very clear and touching picture of her relationship with this man. In the end, one is still not sure why she has been avoiding his phone call all this time. Despite this remaining question, Sears has created in *Africa Solo* a play with lasting impact and unique perspective on the African experience.

Splash dance makes waves

By CHRISTINE GARDINER

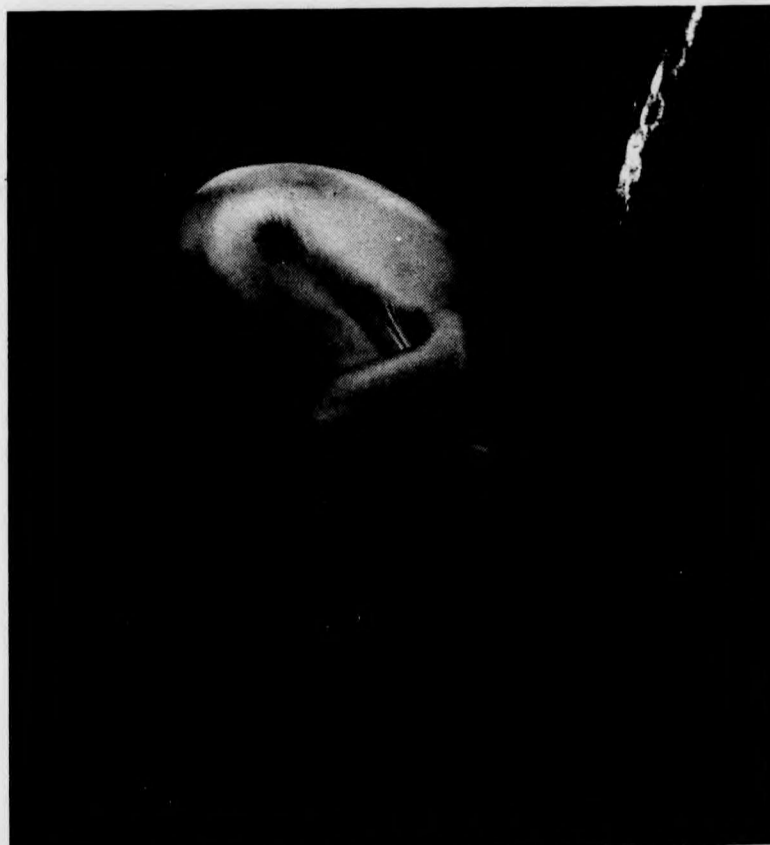
The key to enjoying a performance of modern dance is to maintain an open mind. This means knocking down any of the barriers that can arise and letting the imagination take hold.

After watching a programme performed by the Toronto Independent Dance Enterprise (TIDE), imagination seems to be the operative word. The company is presenting *Making Waves*, an annual choreographic showcase of original, new works.

The programme introduces 10 pieces, all of which are extraordinarily creative and filled with an energy that each individual dancer brings to every set. Of special note here is Lucie Bissonnette, in a sequence titled *Looking Into The Night*. This is, as the programme notes, "a first look into the world of childhood and its integration to adulthood." Bissonnette perfectly captures and embodies the movements, emotions and spirit of the baby through to the adult.

In another solo piece, *Great Wall*, Denise Fujiwara combines flowing movement with constricted movement in a humorous and provocative dance depicting freedom. This interpretation, by the way, could be one of hundreds; it all depends on one's own imagination. Nonetheless, Fujiwara brings to the piece a refreshing blend of energy, spontaneity and sensitivity.

The company is very innovative, using whatever is at their disposal in order to enhance a piece. This is especially obvious when it comes to *Lola and Herb Projecting*, directed by Kim Frank and performed by Darcy Callison and Denise Fujiwara. The



Keeping on your toes: A dancer from TIDE performs in one of the many "imaginative" pieces from the company's latest production *Making Waves*. The show runs from Nov. 19-21 at the TIDE theatre.

piece makes use of slides as a backdrop before which the performers act out their story.

TIDE was co-founded in 1978 by Fujiwara, who has since graduated with an honors degree in dance from York, and Sallie Lyons, who teaches dance here at York, is the co-artistic director. The troupe have won awards from the Canada Council,

the Floyd S. Chalmers Fund, the Laidlaw Foundation and the Ontario Arts Council. From the looks of things, TIDE is destined for many more such honours.

Making Waves '87 will be performed November 19-21 at the TIDE Studio, 45 Bellwoods Ave. at 8:00 p.m. 365-1039.

Sculptor prefers Canadian marble

By CHRISTINE BOUCHARD

Alan Denney, a former York University student, is presently holding an exhibit of his sculptures at the Samuel J. Zacks Gallery. Denney was born in England and emigrated to Canada in 1966. He began sculpting in 1963 at the age of 16. From 1973-74 he attended York University majoring in English. He left after one year because, as he puts it, "I didn't like spot quizzes."

Denney uses a variety of media including wood, stone, bronze, fibreglass and Canadian marble. Denney was asked about his preference for a process called cold-cast bronze which gives a metallic finish when done. He states he likes it because it gives the sculptor more personal control, especially over the surface details. The disadvantages are that the process is very time-consuming and also very expensive, because of the bronze. As an exam-

ple Denney pointed out a small sculpture of a face about six inches long as costing \$30 in plaster versus \$300 in bronze.

Denney finds limestone easier to sculpt than wood because the grain is more even. He says he also likes Canadian marble because it is readily available and can be used for outdoor sculptures—Canadian marble is found outside in nature and is accustomed to the changing Canadian climate. Denney is presently working on large plaster all-reliefs which will later be cast in fibreglass and bronze. These reliefs focus on the Romantic Period and have sexual-political themes. The reliefs will represent parts of the human body extending beyond an intersecting plane.

Denney uses the human form as his primary subject simply because it interests him the most. There are 40 pieces in the Zacks exhibit, dating from 1974-87. Several of the pieces

are abstract but the majority are of the human form. It is Denney's older pieces that are more abstract. Over the years his pieces have become more defined and include more features, especially of the face.

When asked how he gets his ideas, Denney said, "I hate that question!" but then added, "I fiddle around." He does not use models but instead does direct modeling in clay. Denney makes clay maquettes, small preliminary models of the larger work, for most of his pieces. "They may sit around for a year or two" without his doing anything with them, he says.

Denney says he does not make enough money to support himself with his sculpting alone. He also does guest lectures and teaching in the community.

Denney's sculptures will be on display until November 24, at the Samuel J. Zacks Gallery in Stong College.

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