

Sensuous Soloists

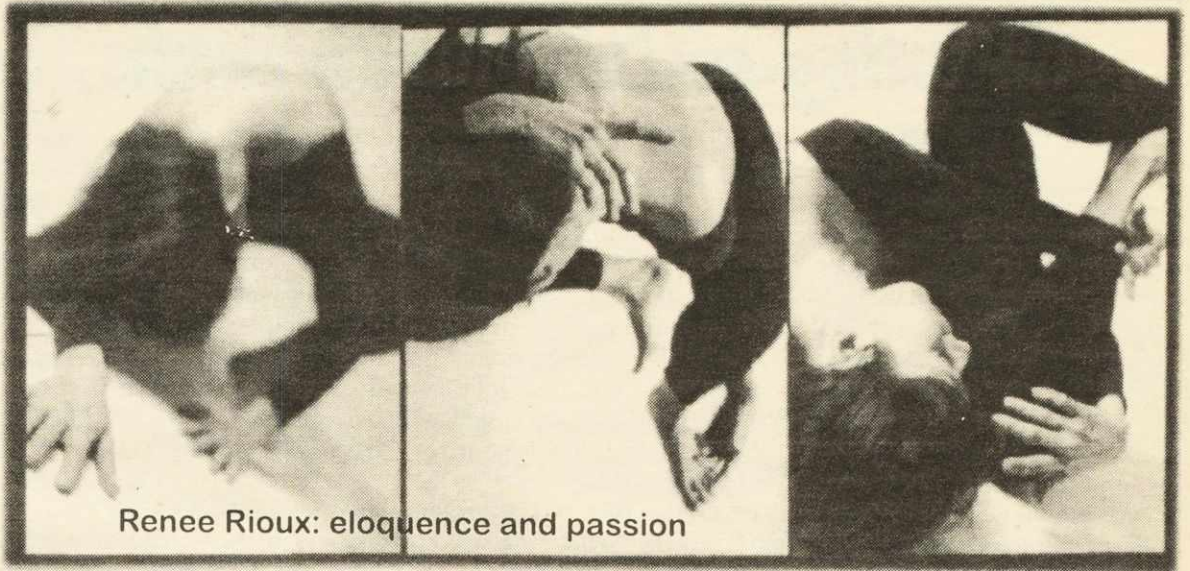
BY JANET FRENCH

The Local Currents Atlantic New Dance Festival kicked off to a start on Feb. 3 with *Sensuous Soloists*, a diverse and eclectic collection of works by some of Eastern Canada's most innovative performers. Although unrelated, the four presented works encompassed themes of self-exploration and were windows to the artists' inner souls.

New Brunswick's Lee Saunders, a veteran in the performing arts and a Somatic Movement Therapist, began the evening with an untitled piece. Saunders is renowned for the harmonization of voice and movement in her work, and this untitled piece did not deviate from that concept. Although there was music, most of Saunders' movement stemmed from her enchanting vocals, which ranged from operatic wailing to quoting Hamlet. Altogether the performance was somewhat crazed and confusing, and harsh critics may describe it as flaky. However,

Saunders had a radiant smile on her face for most of the performance, which made her words and movements seem teasing and sarcastic. Her psychotic facial expressions proved to be priceless and of much amusement, especially when she frantically disassembled one of her props — a plastic model of the brain.

George Stamos followed Saunders with two excellent pieces, *White Man Dancing* and *Horny*. Stamos is simply a stunning dancer, with agility and acrobatic skills that make the head spin. *White Man Dancing*, a piece that was somewhat dark and tortured, was a perfect outlet for Stamos to demonstrate his amazing fluidity. *Horny* is merely a choreographic masterpiece of sexual innuendo and cheekiness. Performed to "Shave 'em Dry," a dirty little song done 20s-style, *Horny* was a cornucopia of come-ons, ranging from gyrating to tongue flickering. This piece was certainly an audience favourite, with Stamos' blatantly sensual and slithering performance.



Renee Rioux: eloquence and passion

Renee Rioux, a dancer with massive talent, presented her piece *Home, Sweet Home*, with eloquence and passion. This piece ranged from tortured writhing on the floor to eventual harmonious contentment. Rioux is an intense, delicate dancer and aesthetically pleasing to watch, but her choreography is confusing. Although beautifully and passionately executed, her movement doesn't conjure as many emotions in the audience as it potentially could. Liberal self-expression is excellent, but there

didn't seem to be much meaning to *Home, Sweet Home* — just a random set of emotions and ideas.

The disappointment of the evening was *Chrys an the mum sky*, a work-in-progress performed by Gwen Noah. Noah is an acclaimed Halifax-based artist whose past works have toured across Canada and received rave reviews. Perhaps there is still time for it to be developed and improved, but currently, *Chrys an the mum sky* is a repetitive series of moves performed with a live, solo cellist.

The work lacks stamina and is too static to retain the audience's attention for long. The pace was mellow, and waiting for a forte or passionate moment proved to be futile, for the piece ended before it actually began. *Chrys an the mum sky* might be a success one day, if Noah covers more ground with it, both figuratively and literally.

Overall the evening was certainly interesting, and proved that the choreographic visions of Eastern Canadian artists are as diverse as ever.

Dancin' round the world

BY JANET FRENCH

It was "around the world in 120 minutes" for the audience at Neptune's DuMaurier Theatre at Neptune on Feb. 6 and 7. Part of Live Art Productions' Local Currents Atlantic New Dance Festival, a showcase presented the talents of worldly Atlantic Canadian artists.

The evening began with a presentation by the AXE Brazil Academy of Capoeira. Capoeira is a Brazilian martial art in the form of dance that was born in an era of slavery and used by captives to escape from slave quarters and harsh punishments. Capoeira is a highly acrobatic and physically demanding art form, incorporating flips, spins, kicks and jumps, and is performed on traditional instruments to chanting live music. The participants, ranging from young to old, were agile, quick and exciting to watch. Under the expert direction of Geraldo Carvalho, AXE Brazil Academy of Capoeira was truly stunning and captivating.

The racing drums and uplifting rhythms continued with the performance of the Kumba Ensemble, an African Percussion and Dance group from the Ross Road School. The group was formed to educate and enrich participants in West African traditions in dance and music beyond the regular school

curriculum. The costumes were vibrant, the rhythm contagious and the dancers dynamic. The tremendous energy of the Kumba troupe was echoed in the enthusiastic cheers from the audience.

The evening then took a turn for the mellow with the performance of *Gagaku and Bugaku*, from Sarah Cox and Poppy Koch. From 17th century Japan, Gagaku is the oldest orchestral music in the world, and Bugaku is the accompanying dance form. The piece *Kiku*, meaning chrysanthemum, featured traditional but simplistic costumes and props. *Kiku* was a gentle dance with soft, soothing movements. The tranquility on the faces of the dancers made the movements seem meditative and peaceful. Some might say that *Bugaku* lacks excitement, but the slow and spiritual movements were somewhat entrancing.

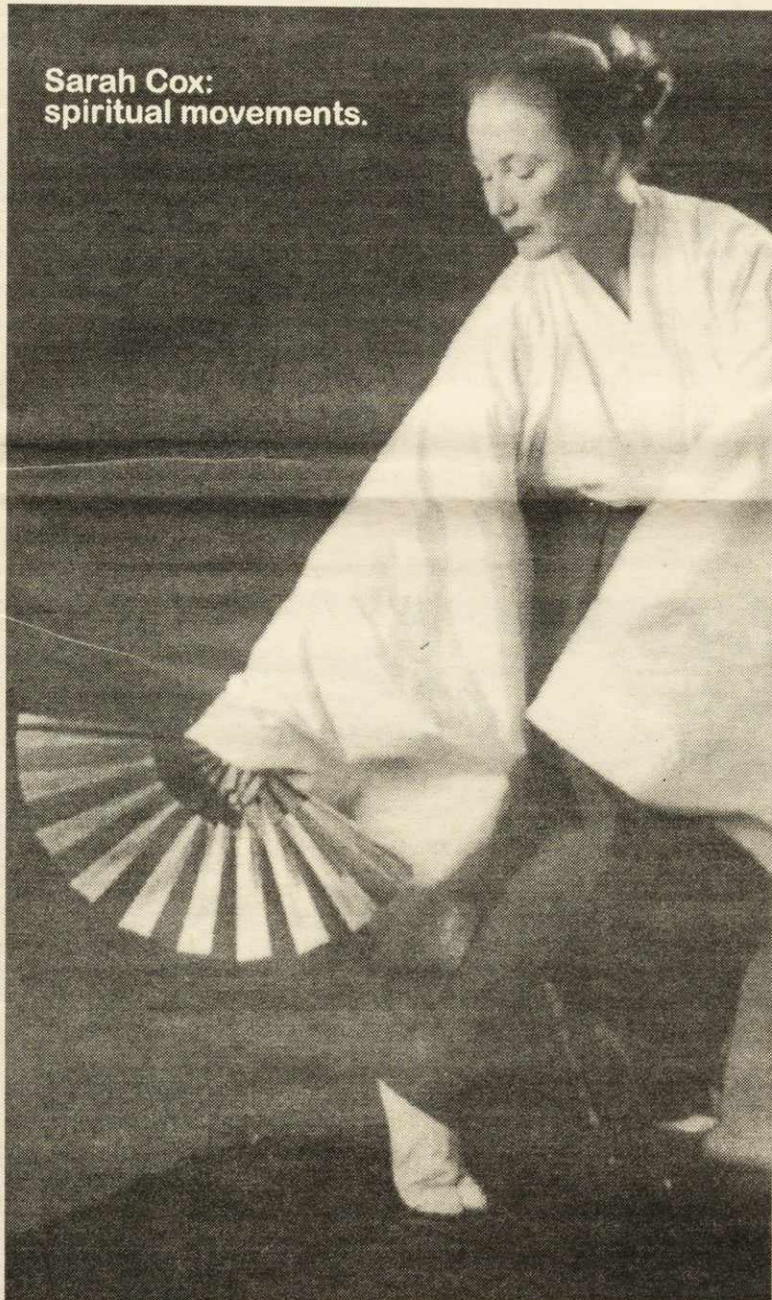
Dian Denis demonstrated that there are no limits to what dance can include, with the presentation of her own art-form that connects dance with projected images. Denis performed *Contemplation*, a work inspired by her experiences on a Buddhist Pilgrimage in Tibet. Denis literally projects her experiences to the audience by moving in front of slides taken on her trip. Denis wears a billowing white costume which allows parts of the images to be projected onto her. The multi-media aspect created a dream-like

atmosphere, where Denis' interaction with the pictures sucked the audience right in. The movement itself lingered and carved out pieces of her pictures strategically. Denis' "Tai-Chi-esque" cascade across the stage was restful and original.

However, the show was stolen by El Viento Flamenco, Newfoundland's one and only Flamenco ensemble. The crowd was dazzled by the frantic footwork of dancer Evelyn Lemelin and the fine accompaniment of Sean Harris, Bob Sutherland, Alex Schwartz and Adam Staple.

The musical members of El Viento hammered out an infectious rhythm, while Lemelin, in her amazing dress, radiated with irresistible sensual charm. Although the reverberating clicking of Lemelin's shoes was most impressive, she demonstrated that Flamenco is at least 50 percent attitude, displaying her proud countenance to the audience throughout the performance. The audience was certainly swept up by the festive spirit, with clapping and hollers of "Ole!"

The Live World Dance Showcase of the Local Currents Atlantic New Dance Festival was fun, energetic and even educational. The showcase was a perfect symposium for Atlantic Canadian Artists to show and share their cultural roots.



Sarah Cox: spiritual movements.

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