

Arts & Entertainment

Marceau still going strong

interview by Van Le

A living legend in the world of mime comes to town next week. Marcel Marceau has been touring extensively worldwide for the last four decades and his reason is that "I must tour or I will be forgotten." This is unnecessary humility for the man whose name is to many of us synonymous with the art of mime. Marceau is most well known for his creation of Bip, "the young brother of Chaplin with a powdered face and his mouth a red sash torn across his face."

Marceau is very much a creator by nature and a very demanding one at that. "If you are not top, you should stop," he declares. Marceau's performance standard requires that each show "be strict and have freshness."

The upcoming show in Edmonton is part of a 16-city Canadian tour which showcases several new pantomimes. "I am faithful to my repertoire, but there is a new generation, a younger generation I want to meet," Marceau explains. The show will be in two parts and Marceau says he has tried for "a balance between tragedy and comedy, joy and sadness, fantasy and reality."

The first part will contain new pieces such as "Creation," which is taken from the book of Genesis in the Bible, "Mirror," a fantasy number; and the "Eates of Hearts" which is a "grim, 'Jack the Ripper' type of tale". This last piece Marceau describes tantalizingly as a "cruel fairytale".

The second part will contain the "classic numbers." It will showcase Bip, who Marceau describes affectionately as "a romantic and burlesque hero; a Don Quixote tilting against the windmills of life."

Marceau says the tour is going "very

very well" and "I am even better now than 30 years ago". He has no plans to retire as of yet saying, "I feel very strong". This strength and energy was evident as he explained his philosophy when it comes to the performing arts and more specifically mime.

Marceau stresses that a mime artist must "not try to compete with words or translate words into gestures but instead, use materials that are stronger than them." "You must create metaphors with the virtuosity of the body" he tells his students.

Marceau speaks of his students and his school in Paris with great pride. It is subsidized by the City of Paris and has 80 students from 20 different countries. "Selection is very difficult and we teach many arts including fencing drama and dance," he says. Marceau teaches there for only part of the year and the rest of the time relies on other teachers. "There is never enough time to do everything you want to do. When I am not touring or teaching, I need time by myself. I socialize very little. Time is precious."

Marceau is incredibly productive and has also tried his hand at writing, illustrating, painting and filmmaking though mime is still for him "the best tool to express a complex world". Although Marceau enjoys his one-man shows, which he sees as his chance "to be a whole entity", he is presently planning a new venture for 1990. Two years from now, after another world tour, Marceau plans to open a company and concentrate on creating "mimodramas." These are what Marceau calls "mime theatre pieces." He suggests that they could be compared to concerts, plays and operas; except done in the mime tradition. And obviously very excited by yet another chance to create, Marceau exclaims, "I want to show off my students!"

Decidedly Jazz eclectic, inventive

Decidedly Jazz Danceworks
SUB Theatre
Tuesday, November 22

review by Rosa Jackson

Decidedly Jazz Danceworks celebrated their fifth anniversary season at SUB Theatre Tuesday night with a performance which marked a change to a more eclectic repertoire.

Prior to this year, the company was a close-knit group of six women; now, its ranks have expanded to include seventeen dancers, six of whom are male. This show also featured the work of four choreographers of diverse backgrounds, making for an exciting mix of styles. Despite a few rough points, it was a refreshing progression for Decidedly Jazz.

The show opened with "Off Ten Balanced," a piece which, using various kinds of movement, explored the theme of balance. Choreographed by Vicki Adams Willis and the dancers themselves, this number was sometimes jazzy and upbeat, sometimes slow and sensual, and frequently acrobatic. Its most interesting aspect was the dancers' reliance on each other for balance.

"Off Ten Balance" also added an element not often seen in dance shows: live music. Standing on a platform, the three musicians (saxophonist Dan Meichel, vocalist and keyboard player Lorna MacLachlan, and guitarist Dewi Wood) offset the dancers visually and at first appeared to be a projected image on the curtain. They were an integral part of the number, and not merely a backdrop, however; the music and the dance seemed to merge into one.

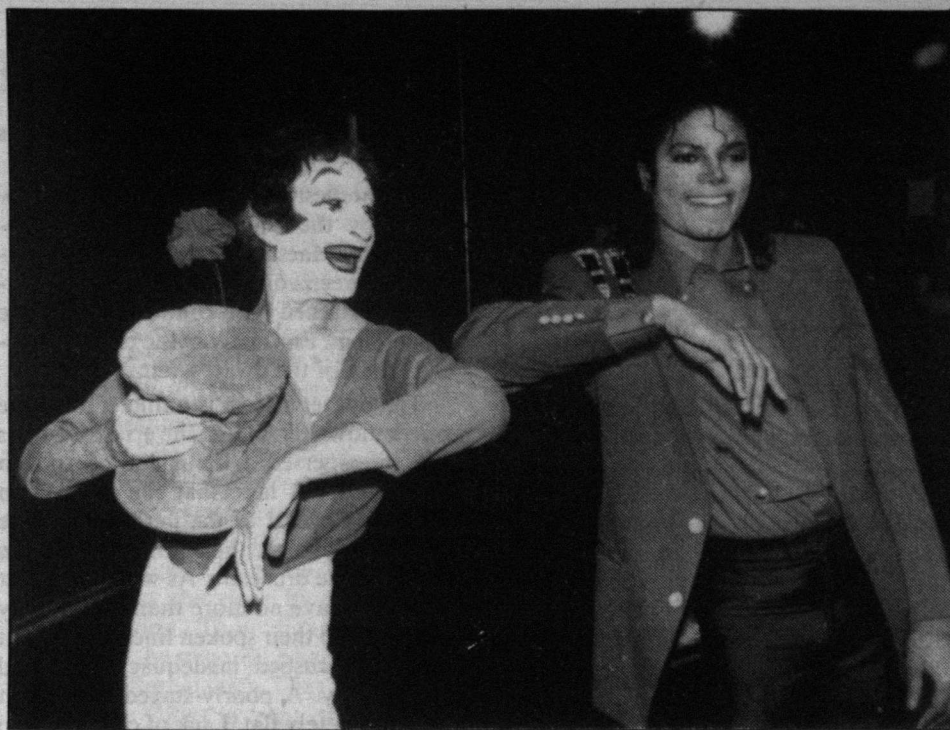
Following this was "Divine Mother Adorned," choreographed by Decidedly Jazz co-founder and dancer Michele Moss.

Wearing bright colours, the dancers did amusing bird imitations to music by Wally Badarou which evoked images of the wilderness. With sinuous hip movements, they traced the African roots of jazz. While it had a promising beginning, this piece seemed to lack direction; it was repetitive rather than progressive.

A number reminiscent of the early days of Decidedly Jazz was Vicki Adams Willis' "Flamingo Rag Plus other Fickle Digressions." This piece was witty and farcical, and used rhythm inventively. To the music of Fats Waller, it portrayed a 1920's fancy dress ball — which got a bit out of hand! The dancers clumsily tripped over not only each other's, but their own feet, and were constantly adjusting their costumes and fixing their hair. During some particularly entertaining moments, a couple danced as if they were partners, but several feet apart from each other. The running shoes that the dancers wore with their ball gowns and tuxedos were also a humorous touch.

"Fairwind," choreographed by Leni Williams of the Danny Sloan Dance Company on Boston to music by Pat Metheny, was an artistic piece in which the dancers appeared to be clouds swept about by the wind. The words Williams wrote to describe the piece were "Fair is the wind that blows — caressing, shifting, ever-changing and always correcting life by the Master's plan. And I accept this change and call it by its surname — Chinook." Although a dance depicting the wind and clouds would seem to risk being lulling, the dancers overcame that with their energy and obvious enthusiasm. They conveyed the changeable nature of the wind; from a slight breeze to a hurricane.

A startling contrast to "Fairwind" was provided by "The Blind Struggle: Female Rounds — Mammoth Tears," a Denise



Marcel Marceau with The Gloved One at Sadler Wells Theatre in London earlier this year. The grand old man of mime appears at SUB Theatre Monday.

MacNeil plays from the heart

interview by Mike Spindloe

Rita MacNeil lives where she does against the odds. Born and raised in Cape Breton, Nova Scotia, she remains there to this day while pursuing a career in music that has brought her growing international acclaim, which has lately culminated in the breakthrough sales of her fourth album, *Flying On Your Own*.

MacNeil declines to label her music, saying "it's not really any one thing; it's just music that comes from the heart." She does admit folk and country influences, though, along with "a bit of rock and roll."

Now she has a new album, *Reason To Believe*, and a tour to go with it. Her stop in Edmonton is part of a month long cross-country jaunt that will include a dozen or so dates in Ontario and a similar number in the western provinces. MacNeil is no stranger to Edmonton audiences, having been here "more than once," including

SUB Theatre. She recalls "enthusiastic" receptions in Edmonton and hopes for more of the same.

MacNeil has also recently completed an album of Christmas songs for release this fall. The album, entitled *Now The Bells Ring*, includes "five of my traditional favourites and five songs that I wrote myself."

Her more familiar territory is with songs that "deal with feelings that everyone has. They are songs of struggle, songs of hope and songs of love." MacNeil has built her reputation with these kinds of songs through her appearances at folk festivals and pubs over the last several years.

This time around she's touring with a five-piece band, including two keyboard players, guitar, bass and drums, and hoping to expand her growing audience even further. MacNeil will appear at SUB Theatre on November 27.



Rita MacNeil brings her show all the way from Nova Scotia to the Jubilee Tuesday night.

Clarke creation which premiered at the Olympic Arts Festival in January. This modern piece dealt with Darwin's Theory of Evolution. The dancers were dressed identically in spandex outfits with hoods covering their heads; the men wore fluorescent pink, and the women black. The dance was synchronized, mechanical and gruelling; those who could not keep up were dragged away by the men in pink. At the end of the number, a group of four women — "survivors," I assume — hugged each other, and the men brought out

buckets and squeezed spongefuls of water over their heads. Difficult as this was to comprehend, the number as a whole was striking and thought-provoking.

The only thing which was lacking from Tuesday's performance was a real sense of unity always present in the smaller group which used to make up the company. This will no doubt take time, but meanwhile Decidedly Jazz is still one of the most entertaining and accessible dance troupes to visit Edmonton this year.