

Arts

New dance company starts off on wrong foot

By JENNIFER PARSONS

When York dance students Roderick Johnson and Jacqueline Simm and two other choreographers got together to form Independent Dance Alliance, they were hoping to provide a much needed forum for independents to showcase their latest works. But *Premiere Performance*, presented in the second week of February, was only part of the solution. Dance Alliance did bring together a selection of new works by six different choreographers, but it failed to make it a successful evening of performance. One of the first problems was that the majority of the dance pieces remained choreographed movement step by counted step so that, with the exception of those pieces performed by the choreographers themselves, there was no sense of emotional impulse behind that movement.

"Just For A While" was one exception. Choreographed and performed by Bayla Rae Goldman, the work was a combination of the kinetic movement of modern and the medium of jazz dance. Goldman had a very strong personality in performance and that personality made itself the through-line for a series of movements which, though not especially innovative in themselves, provide a vehicle for her obvious affinity with the music.

"Let Freedom Ring," another successful piece, employed three dancers, one of whom was choreographer Jodi Soltau. Soltau stood out in the trio as the performer who was not just dancing but performing a living feeling experience. Soltau, who along with her dance training, has a BFA in theatre from York, was almost scary as her tortured expres-

sion and completely focused body energy moved to the gospel music in a way that made her seem possessed.

The other York student in the alliance, artistic director Roderick Johnson also gave an exceptional performance with his work "Non Troppo Lento." With his painted, loin-clothed body and sculptured wooden bird-mask, Johnson has created a ceremonial piece which was a careful study not only of the movements of a bird but of the essence of ritual.

Three good performances out of seven is almost "not half bad," but when all of the technical difficulties are considered, even these good performances could not have saved the evening. To begin with, the audience was left waiting in their seats without explanation for fifteen minutes before the performance began. This in itself would not be worth mentioning except that the first set of pieces lasted only twenty minutes. While the intermission came surprisingly quickly for some, it was a reassuring prospect for those not seated in the first three rows; these people had to stand during the performance in order to see anything. In fact before the performance was five minutes old most of the audience members had left their seats to stand along the walls. Even then, they could not see anything of the floor work.

While it is unfortunate the single level third floor of the Ralf Thorton Centre worked so poorly as a performance space, for most newly formed companies any space is better than no space at all. Still, in the case of dance, movement below the level of the waist is almost half the performance and, at least on that evening, half a performance is exactly what the audience got.



NO, DON'T HIT ME: York student Roderick Johnson in costume for his dance piece "Non Troppo Lento" (trans. "Don't Trip the Lentils").



FOR ART'S SAKE: Exhibition of Canadian contemporary artists' diaristic work comes to York's AGYU on its national tour.

AGYU displays experiential art

By ADAM KARDASH

Alternative perspectives on art and everyday life are currently on display in the AGYU's latest presentation entitled "The Diary Exhibition." Featured in the exhibition are the diaristic artworks of 16 contemporary Canadian artists who commonly explore the relationship between the creative process and lived experience.

The exhibition was produced and is presently being circulated by the Art Gallery of Memorial University in St. John's, Newfoundland. Exhibition Curator Marlene Creates, an artist herself, developed the theme of the presentation, solicited information to galleries and artists across Canada, and then selected the appropriate works from the submissions that she received.

The result is an extremely diverse exhibition consisting of collage, film, installation, photography, video, and other media that express the individual artists' first-hand experience. Love and friendship, travel, dreams, society, and the self are among the many subjects uniquely addressed by artists, who, according to Creates, are "worthy of attention."

Artist Geoffrey Wonnacott, for example, explores elements of time, space and self in his piece entitled "Occupation- A journal excerpt." In order to create the display, Wonnacott sealed himself in an 18'x27' public gallery space for a month with only food, water, and materials for his work. The work is a selection of pages from the journal produced during his confinement and consists of seven 2'x4' wooden frames that

contain photographs and notes from each of the days.

"For myself, art resides in the process, in the context and in the state of mind," writes Wonnacott in reference to the piece. "The tangible artwork is representative of a creative process in which the artist has been involved. It is the residue, it is the document, of the artist's endeavours."

In another display, Patrick Close's "Travelling" an excerpt from the series "a little Angst" explores quite a different experience. The exhibit consists of six photographs with accompanying prose, which the artist gathered during his travels through North America and Europe. The photographs examine the personal thoughts and doubts of a photographer about the medium and process of photography.

For example, Close challenges the way in which society, so very often relies heavily on the photograph to document our lives. In the first photograph, which depicts a hand holding a travelogue opened to a page with a photo, Close writes: "and in these coloured, blurred rectangles, we mark our passage/ through this reality."

Similarly, in the third photograph that shows a couple dancing and intensely enjoying themselves, Close writes: "without this photograph/ i might not remember that night/ but it is more amazing/ that i trust this image/ even more than my own memory."

One of the most interesting exhibits is Marcel Gosselin's "Une Histoire De Pommes," which consists of three wood panels displaying decayed apple cores, paper, paint,

and masonite. Gosselin collected his family's discarded apple cores and placed them, and his accompanying notes, in chronological order on the wood boards. Although it is not one of the most aesthetically pleasing displays in the exhibit, according to AGYU curator Claudia Lupri it is certainly one of the most popular.

Gosselin's display is a unique record of his everyday experiences over a short period of time. "These short stories would have been forgotten were it not for the remains of the fruit," writes Gosselin. "Seeing them together produced in me a nostalgia similar to that felt when going through the family photo album."

The most well known, and the largest, of the displays is Stephen Cruise's "The Visitor's Book." The mixed media exhibit consists of 24 pedestals, approximately three feet high, which display 24 different objects from Cruise's "Dream Diary." The exhibit evolved from a daily agenda notebook which was gradually transformed into a log annotating and recording the artist's dreams. Each of the objects captures a different Cruise "Dream Experience."

With reference to the formulation of his display, Cruise says that "oft times I was made aware in the dreams that this 'sight' would be material for the book . . . I think these objects come in the dreams like gifts. They have no language, they just come like presents."

The Diary Exhibition premiered at Memorial University and the AGYU marks its first destination on a national tour. The show runs until March 18.

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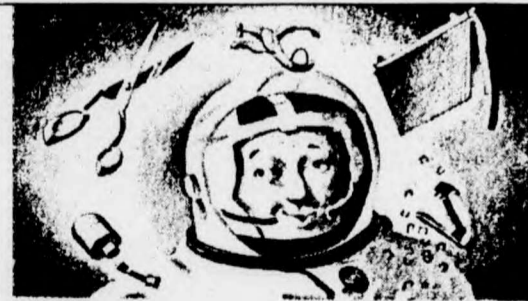
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