

# Montreal Ballet impresses

by Marion Frazer

A first class Ballet company containing only six members? Impossible by no means! Montreal-based Ballet Ys is a company is a

suitcase. Its activities "are aimed at developing the excellence of Canadian artists in dance, choreography, music and design" - and this for Ballet Ys means being on the road.

Part of its philosophy is didacticism; it wishes to introduce as many communities as possible to its particular form of modern art. The size of the company lends itself especially well to the wide range of facilities in which it must be prepared to perform. Didacticism for Ballet Ys also takes the form of practical teaching. For example, it offered its human resources to Halifax's Dance Co-op, providing local dancers with an invaluable opportunity to refine their skills in intensive Workshop sessions.

"Ys", the company tells us, is a word of Celtic origin meaning "of

the first, her sex is stifled, quelled and finally symbolically strangled; the second shows her flauntingly debasing it to a lazy, seductive Janis Joplin number and in the third, she is trying to come to terms with herself, at last discarding her shame in an acknowledged desire to uncover an honest identity. The ballet is particularly remarkable for its introduction of a final nude scene. It was beautifully done. If the scene was a trifle self-consciously climactic, its attitude might well be justified by an intention of the choreographer to eclipse the first two visions with the memorable

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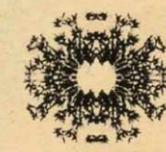
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the times"; Ballet Ys is contemporary ballet at its best. The art displayed Wednesday, Nov. 10 and Thursday, Nov. 11 in Q.E.'s auditorium combined the talents of company members Noble Barker, Gloria Grant and Gail Benn with those of brilliant "new" choreographers Stephen Greenston, Robert Desrosiers and Ann Ditchburn. Ann Ditchburn's "Nelligan", on the program for both nights, has received a star studded collection of rave reviews and standing ovations. Specially commissioned for Ballet Ys, "Nelligan" takes as a basis the life of the poet-hero of Quebec who gives it its name. It is an immensely powerful compression of passion into a ballet duet. The emotional experience of the dance, integrated with the sensitivity and technical precision of the dancers, left audience members slumped exhausted in their seats. Another interesting ballet, also performed both nights, was Gail Benn's "All that Wasted Shame". Three strikingly different views of a woman's sexuality are presented. In

contrast of the third. Interpretations of modern life and emotion into the medium of dance—that's the Ballet Ys repertoire. Excitement is the key note from "Echoplex" with its vibrant and various sidelights on attitudes, through the swirling struggle of "Desert" ("The desert is a place where people die because there's no life...at the same time people go to the desert to learn...a place of power and energy...") to the flirtatious classicism of "Sand". The outlook is not, on the whole, pessimistic, though there is a hint of isolationism. "Thirty years After", for example, portrays a changing human closeness, revealed in dance patterns, from the "forties" interaction to the present separateness. Dancers in "Echoplex" switch partners seemingly at random and frequently appear alone. Yet it is possible, as "Desert" and "All That Wasted Shame" would seem to indicate, that out of this nihilistic search for utter simplicity, self-knowledge may be acquired.

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