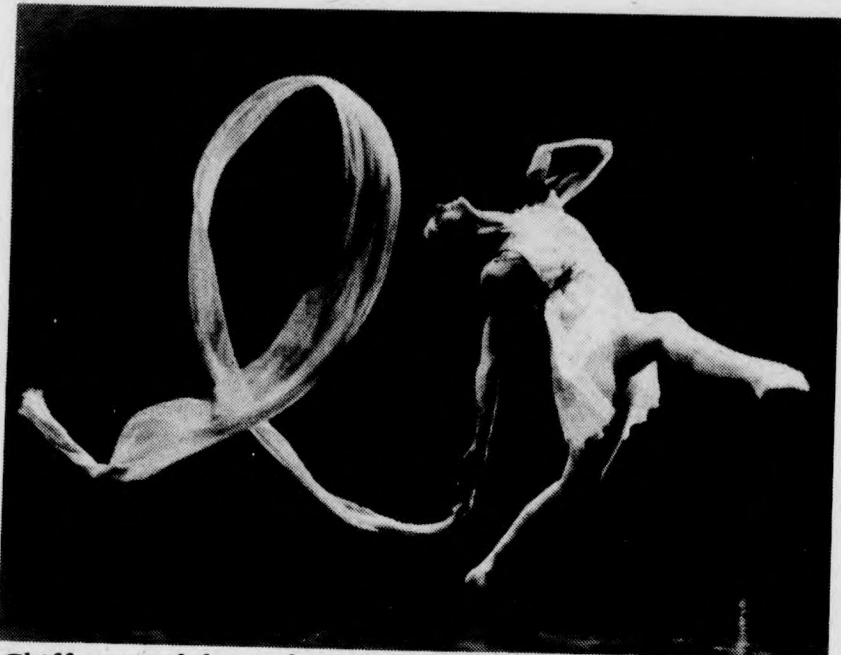


ENTERTAINMENT

Trisler company at Ryerson

New York dancers better than material



Chiffon scarf dance from Spirit of Denishawn

W. HURST

The Joyce Trisler Danscompany didn't deserve the small houses it got last week at the Ryerson Theatre. The dancers are fast, risk-taking men and women and the programme made much of their abilities. Unfortunately, one piece was much less impressive than the performers.

It's off-putting for any artist to hold up their artistic heritage to ridicule. Yet this is what the Trisler company does, with a piece called *Spirit of Denishawn*. Ruth St. Denis and Ted Shawn were unabashedly commercial, working the vaudeville circuit and doing 'bus and truck tours' of the country. However, their company, Denishawn, was also a well-spring for contemporary dance artists. Its influence was broad and powerful. Of equal importance was Ruth St. Denis a dancer of limited range but great charisma and stage finesse.

The Trisler company's display of Denishawn material includes the mandatory chiffon scarf dances. Sadly, it also includes two solos originated by Ted Shawn. These were heavy-footed and fussily costumed, much like Shawn might have done them. The audience laughed as heartily as if watching Ballets Trockadero de Monte Carlo, as if watching a joke. The Denishawn dances may be outdated, outmoded, and by our standards, rapidly theatrical. However, to present these 50-year old dances out of context and for laughs is a mean disservice.

The two pieces that completed the programme were choreographed by the company founder, Joyce Trisler who died in 1979. *Dance for Six* (1969) started as a too literal translation of the Vivaldi score. However, the phrases that followed the music so closely would slip away

as bodies dissolved formations. Therefore, the movement easily became a smooth counterpoint to the music. *Four Temperaments* (1975) is much like *Dance for Six*, with its use of choreography on then against the Hindemith score. However, instead of groups, *Four Temperaments* uses couples and solos. Trisler attempted to portray the four (classical) temperaments, with one couple per section. Eugene Roscoe was outstanding in each of his appearances. Roscoe always moves slightly ahead of the music, so that he finished a turn, land or spin exactly on the end of a scored phrase. All of his work was unhurried but quick at the same time.

Trisler's style of movement, like George Balanchine's, displayed a succinct knowledge of the music used, yet the steps avoided the obvious musical set-ups. A ground base was not followed literally, nor was an allegro passage matched by an allegro movement.

The company looked under-rehearsed or over-tired. One woman looked at others for her cues. One man was constantly late. However, the dancers are, generally excellent. Feet sharpen the tips of arcs in the air. Women throw themselves easily, pulling themselves out of a movement as the last moment before falling.

The Trisler choreography is well-crafted but seemed more exciting by virtue of the performers collective excellence. Aside from the distasteful Denishawn piece, the Joyce Trisler Danscompany danced as if they had a full house, and a stellar repertory.

People as creative impulse

Stapleton's humanscape: Not doing it is harder

PAULETTE PEIROL

Bill Stapleton's Cabbagetown home is a self-made art gallery of humanism. The backyard fence is a mural of colorful images painted by neighbourhood school children in commemoration of the Year of the Child. Much of Stapleton's Spring cleaning consists of retouching the vivid acrylic colours on the fence. Inside his home, his grandchildren's artistic endeavors share space on densely covered walls with his own painting and those of his contemporaries.

Stapleton paints what he calls "humanscapes"—the landscapes in his paintings are people. The people who evoke his creative impulse are the essential motive for his work. "Leave the landscape to photography; the painter can't do much with it. The human face though, shows much subtlety," he says.

"Leave the landscape to photography; the painter can't do much with it. The human face though, shows much subtlety," he says.

Many other Canadian artists would disagree with this contention. The Group of Seven certainly disprove his theory, and Glen Loates seems to find plenty of subtlety in natural landscapes. But Stapleton reacts with the idea that "if someone came to Canada, they'd think we were all trees and rocks." Therefore he focuses on the people living amongst these "trees and rocks". Stapleton concludes "I guess I do it by default, since other Canadians don't (paint people)."

Although Stapleton's painting has strong emotional undercurrents, it

does not lack in precision. Technique is a vital tool for his art. Stapleton maintains that "you can't have emotion without the language to express it." He thinks the weakness in post-war painting is that "it concentrates on colour, but neglects design and structure" and he stresses that "the traditional principles of art must be maintained."

However, Stapleton is not a concrete realist. He defines the difference between portraits and painting people as "Portraits lack soul, while painting strips the varnish. After the artist develops

facility, he can delve into the emotion of his subject." Stapleton sees painting as music, "like music, the picture must flow. Colour is like notes which are a theme running through the work to give it harmony. Otherwise, it's like a paper cut-out."

Stapleton's works form a collage of varied experiences - culled from time served in the War, years in Russia and on Perri Island in Canada, and evenings with the Campaneros at the Lyra Cafe in Toronto. His painting aims to "document the people" and Stapleton feels that the artist has a social responsibility and cannot be

egotistical. He is an active member of "Arts for Peace" in Canada.

Canadian of British descent, Stapleton stresses that "a true Canadian artist must be Canadian born" in order to capture the essence of our cultural heritage. Zack's gallery in Stong College will be displaying 40 of Stapleton's paintings and sketches from March 21 to 31. While Stapleton often asks himself "Why care about art?", his answer is a ways the same: "I do it because not doing it is harder."

Mabel and Major-General soar in Stong's Pirates

ELIZABETH SANTIA

The Pirates of Penzance was staged for four successful performances in the Stong College Junior Room with the last performance February 26. This performance was accompanied by the Stong Titwillow orchestra. *Pirates* is an operatta written by Gilbert Sullivan, satirizing Victorian values.

Two ingredients essential for audience appeal are strong singing and a sense of fun. The Stong production had both.

Robert Mason, the handsome Pirate King, sang with a robust voice which suited his part well. Michael Herren, as Frederic the Pirate Apprentice, sounded like the once famous crooner Rudy Vallee. As Ruth, the buxom Pirate Maid, Frieda Nagel was one of the more popular

characters, with the audience. However, she appeared winded and on the verge of losing her voice a few times. At these times, the orchestra overwhelmed her.

Mabel, a pivotal character and daughter of the Major-General, was played by Jo Harvey. From Harvey's first entrance her sister, the other women, sounded heavenly and their bright, extremely feminine costumes suited their parts.

One of the musical numbers is a patter song, a trecherous tongue-twister sung by Bruce Poole who played the modern Major-General. He and the chorus pronounced each syllable emphatically. Amazingly, not one word was missed.

If you define fun as laughing, clapping and enjoying yourself, then the audience got its share.

NEXT WEEK

Sun Runners

Greasers

Rockers

Gypsy

HOLIDAY INN YORKDALE

Now Featuring

BOBBY G. GRIFFITH

Holiday Inn Toronto - Yorkdale
Dufferin St. & Hwy. 401
789-5161

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF REQUIRED

Excalibur (circ. 12,000) requires an Editor-In-Chief for the 1983-84 school year. The successful applicant will have previous editorial and production experience, be able to recruit and manage volunteer staff and have a nose for news. Send resume to P. Beard, Chairperson of the Board, 111 Central Square, 4700 Keele Street, Downsview, Ontario.

See London and SAVE!

Now you can afford London with a low-cost TRAVEL CUTS flight!

Fixed Return from **\$459**

Open Return from **\$639**

One Way from **\$299**

Going TRAVEL CUTS
YourWay!
The travel company of CFS
TRAVEL CUTS TORONTO
U of T, 44 St. George St
416 979-2406