

# New dance at The Church

By SUZANNE MILLER

Vanouwer's Debbie Brown and Friends opened the evening with *Tiyuana, August 34th*, an arrangement of slow-moving gymnastic contortions. Debbie Brown changes the meaning of gymnastics by the theatricalizing the gymnastic movements and equipment. The highly competitive nature of gymnastics is altered by performing it within the context of dance. Although this idea of non-competitive dance is novel and entertaining, it never quite went beyond the boundaries of sport and entertainment, and didn't seem to realize itself as dance. This was true of most of Brown's work, with the exception of *Streamlines*. In this piece, the only source of light were green and blue neon wands held by the performers, a dramatic use of lighting which mesmerized the audience. As they watched the wands circle and shake to the percussive and cyclical music of *Savant*. The overall effect of *Streamlines* was hypnotic. Originally choreographed for twenty people, in this version, three performers enveloped the space like fireflies dancing in the night.

Halifax artist Gwen Noah presented a new work danced without music and without a title. Her physical strength and concentrated focus, moved through angular positionings interspersed with dynamic movement sequences and three spoken phrases: "Hi, how are you?", "I'm waiting! I'm waiting!", and a spontaneous burst of short laughter. After each spoken phrase, Noah would resume her dance and her non-literal movements.

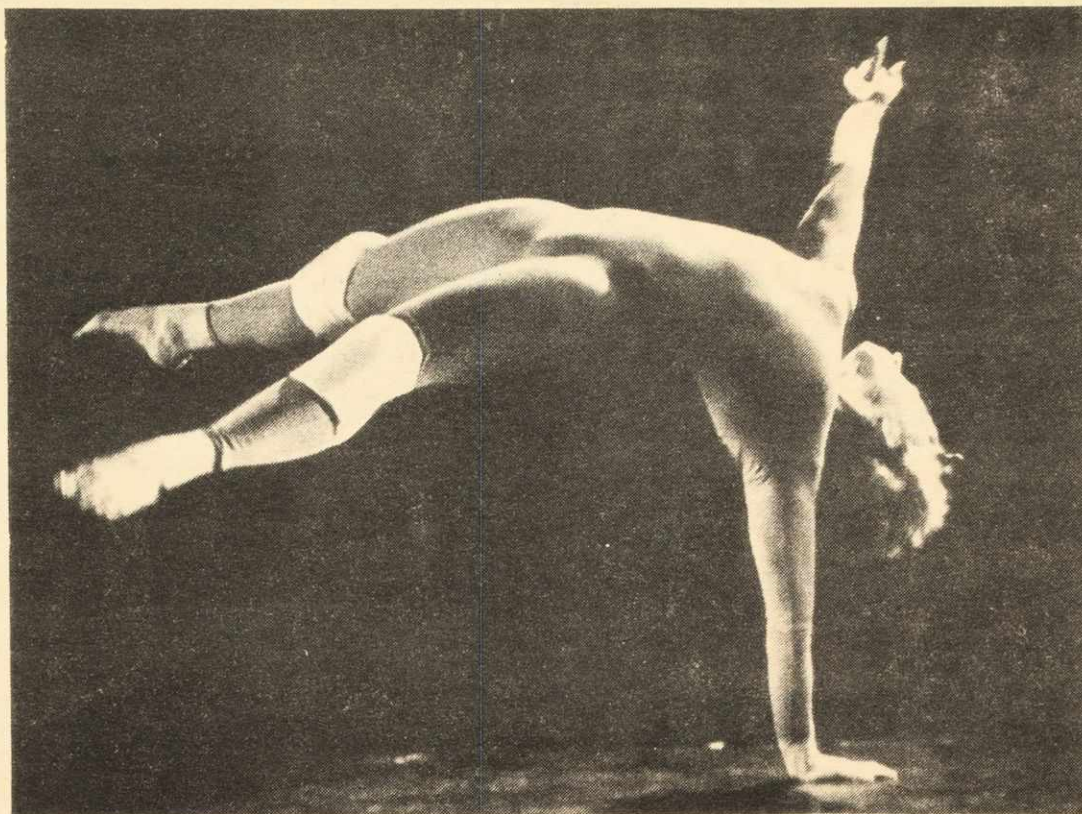
*Bagerina*, choreographed and danced by Judith Hendin, worked with the prop of a garbage can, which set the location in the alley of some city. Hendin,

dressed like a bag lady, resembled Carol Burnett in the closing off of her television show. Eventually the bag lady is sucked into the garbage can, where the second section begins. Although the second section continues the narrative of the bag lady and her remembrance of better days, the movements in this section became more abstract. Hendin's use of a cylinder attached to her body changed her from an identifiable, even comical, bag lady to an unidentifiable shape which resembled a caterpillar-freeing itself from its cocoon.

These interesting shapes sometimes obscured the narrative and confused the audience. The second half was danced expressively and the violent, yet lyrical, movements seemed to echo the age-old stereotype of woman-as-victim.

*Rhyme nor Reason* was represented by Leica Hardy. Dressed in a simple, purple two-piece costume, the piece dealt with the process of growing up. Using slides and nursery rhyme variations in the music, the movement was choreographed on the basis of children's games, moving towards the "trials and tribulations" of adulthood. Hardy's strong technique and the precise execution of her dance was the strength of the work.

All in all, this event was well attended both nights and demonstrated the interest that contemporary dance has in Halifax. The setting of The Church was ideal for dance because of its spacious hardwood floor and the dramatic and beautiful architecture characteristic of a renovated historic church. Owner Normand Bernier says he bought the property in order to provide a venue for Halifax performers. The next *IndepenDance* series is a solo show by Sheilagh Hunt and Chris Mijca, April 23 and 24 at The Church.



Debbie Brown "Streaming" Photo by Chris Randle

## NSCAD jams

by HEATHER MACCRIMMON

NSCAD students' Performance Night promises to be more than your average school play. This Saturday night (March 28) at Club Flamingo, students will be staging the 100th anniversary of their college. NSCAD student Teresa Connors organized the event but chose not to screen the acts, which has resulted in over 27 varied and innovative acts ranging from serious art to pure entertainment.

Uli Kahlich, a German exchange student, will be presenting a very ambitious textile project in which she wants to demonstrate how a person can become trapped in modern industrial environment despite wanting to escape. Her piece will incorporate modern environmental sounds and a "cocoon", knit from strips of lace curtains. Uli chose curtains because "these are the things people use to hide or

protect themselves from their environment."

On the lighter side, the co-M.C. of the show, who goes by the name of Zab, will be performing a rendition of Donovan's "Atlantis" on steel drums. Other acts include a yodelling cowboy, a zipper band, balloon players, mime, poetry, dance, videos, slide presentations and plenty of music from traditional Irish to guitar duos. Most of the acts are five to ten minutes long and the whole evening will culminate in a "Final Jam" where all the performers will play together.

A video of the evening will be made by students and segments will also be filmed for use in a feature length documentary by Halifax filmmaker, Bill MacGillivray on the college that will be aired on CBC Atlantic and distributed to theatres nationwide. The documentary, to be entitled simply "NSCAD", is a government funded project in honour of

the college's 100th anniversary. It will deal with such things as the college's history, its politics and the progress of former students and staff. MacGillivray's company, Picture Planet Film Productions, is responsible for this film and also used NSCAD as a location in their previous film "Life Classes", which is a feature length drama to be viewed on First Choice pay-TV this fall.

All in all, Performance Night promises to be a fun and entertaining evening. Organizers are hoping to make it a yearly event. Unlike most other colleges and universities, the art college has no real campus or sport teams and this event provides students with an opportunity to both work together and display their ideas and talents.

Things get under way at 8:00 and tickets are \$5.00, \$3.00 for students. Proceeds are going towards NSCAD's Centennial Scholarship Fund.



Bill and his famous mandolin

## All right, Bill!

By HEATHER HUESTON

Bluegrass music brings out the hillbilly in everyone. Last Saturday night at the Cohn, the daddy of bluegrass, Bill Monroe, and his Bluegrass Boys had the packed audience clapping, whistling, and shouting out loud as if it were an indoor jamboree.

Up on stage, dressed two-piece suits and Stetsons, the band twanged through the bluegrass classics such as *Blue Moon of Kentucky*, *Wicket Path of Sin*, and *Rolling in My Sweet Baby's Arms*. The music ranged from instrumentals to gospel songs and the regular heartfelt bluegrass songs in either of the two bluegrass speeds — slow and plaintive or hang-onto-the-

buggy breakneck. Monroe had only to say the title of the next piece to send the audience into anticipatory whoops and "all right, Bill!"s. Everyone at this concert already knew all the repertoire off by heart.

The great thing about bluegrass, besides the simple folk lyrics (which usually avoid the pretentiousness of "speaking for the little man" common in modern folkie-folk music) is the way they sing. For a 75 year old man, Monroe still flung himself into the upper ranges, in songs like *Uncle Pen* where the volume roller-coasts from almost fade-out to a holler ("... you could HEAR IT talk, you could HEAR IT sing...") Monroe supplied plenty of vocal acrobatics — his

voice cracked "oo-old man" as he bleated out the sad story of *The Old, Old House*. He was at his best during the second half when the audience could call out requests. "I will play that for yew," he said calmly to a scum of voices (including one guy who yelled out for "Oi saw da loit!")

The band was strong in the harmonizing gospels and the fiddle solos in *Jerusalem Ridge* took the sound from full and sweet to raw, open strings — as Monroe described it, "just so they talk to you, tell you the story" like his uncle played fiddle.

The concert wrapped up after a standing ovation and a fiery, strident finale of *John Henry* ("... was a steel driving man, Lord, Lord"—).