

ENTERTAINMENT

Trailblazer brings unique dance to SUB

Jennifer Muller and the Works
SUB Theatre, March 8, 9 and 10

by Patrice Struyk
SUB Theatre's latest presentation in its modern dance series is *Jennifer Muller and*

the Works. They are, without doubt, the most difficult company to categorize, for Muller, the founder and choreographer, is a most complex and prolific individual.

Muller's dance background is eclectic. A professional dancer since age 15, she has,

among multitudinous accomplishments, danced for Jose Limon, helped establish Louis Falco's company (at SUB last year), choreographed for illustrious troupes like *Nederlands Dans*, and is currently creating an all-evening work. Her resultant style (or

"approach", her preferred term) is a body of "maximalistic, humanistic" works.

Unlike a number of contemporary choreographers, Muller is not a post-modernist. That is, her creations are not abstract. Rather, they are imagistic and tend to depict processes. For example, her very popular "Tub" is about (what else?) bathing. The Works' unintended trademark number, "Speeds", involves changes of tempo upon signal.

Relationships and communication are prevalent themes in Muller's choreography. "I want my work to talk," she says, citing "Lovers", a dance referred to by some as "overt sex." Actually, it reflects her belief that lovers don't take the time to really talk to each other.

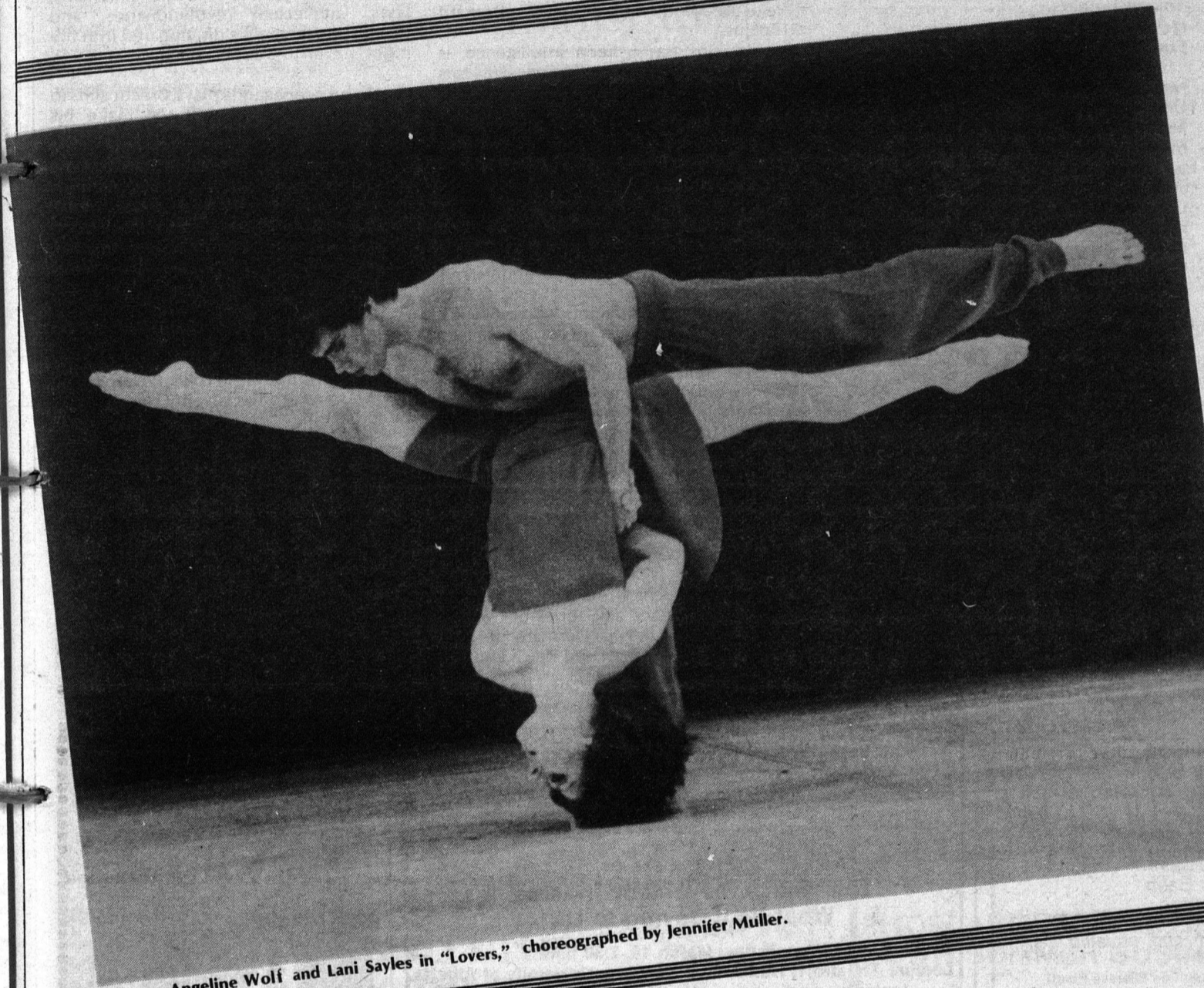
One's personal development, asserts Muller, should manifest itself in creative development. "We all create out of our own personality. And I never want it (her work) to repeat itself." It is necessary, she adds, to "dive in and risk."

Physically, too, the Works' repertoire seems to be quite influenced by the falling and bending and risking favoured in Muller's Jose Limon days.

The nine members of the troupe (including Muller) come from such diverse locales as Belgium, Honduras, and Detroit. Stylistic background is of less importance than is strong, usable technique (to carry off the very demanding choreography), generosity of spirit, openness and personal energy. As Muller believes that "dance can have the impact of theatre", it is no surprise that the study of acting is a regular part of the Works' regimen.

And it is interesting to note the impact of the visual arts upon Muller. "Mondrian" and "Wyeth" were inspired by their namesakes: "Lovers", by Klimt paintings. Music, on the other hand, is custom-written for the pieces, and is an accompaniment to the dance rather than its *raison d'être*.

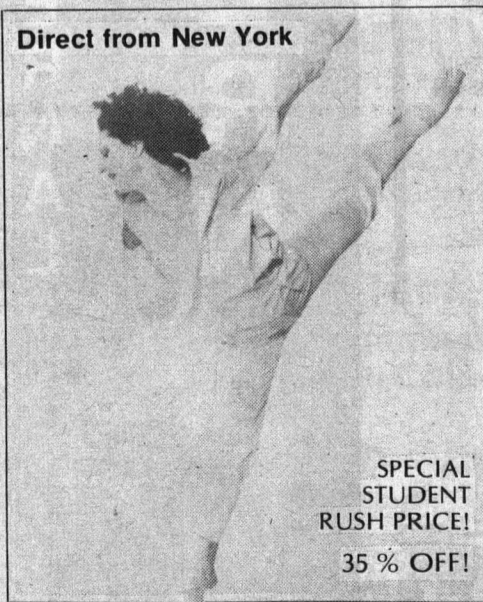
Though she doesn't consider herself avant-garde, Jennifer Muller has progressed into the realm of dance on video. "The marriage of video and dance hasn't clicked in yet," Muller says, revealing that she has many such projects planned. Considering that this choreographer started using the medium long before it was popular, one is heartened. Such foresight and scope can only signal exciting moments to come in the Works' performances.



Dancers Angeline Wolf and Lani Sayles in "Lovers," choreographed by Jennifer Muller.

JENNIFER MULLER

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