

Donne Dance

by Suzanne Lundrigan

Frank Panych, artistic director of the Alberta Dance Theatre, is marrying literature to dance. "I have this idea that by studying literary conventions you gain a unique approach to dance," explains Panych.

Reflecting Panych's recent brush with Renaissance literature, the production *The Ejaculations* is a look at the poetry of John Donne.

"The title," Panych shakes his head, "everybody asks about the title. I guess it's a comment on today's society... people see that word from a very limited perspective. Literally it means 'sudden utterances' as in a short prayer or brief emotion. People don't know about that definition today."

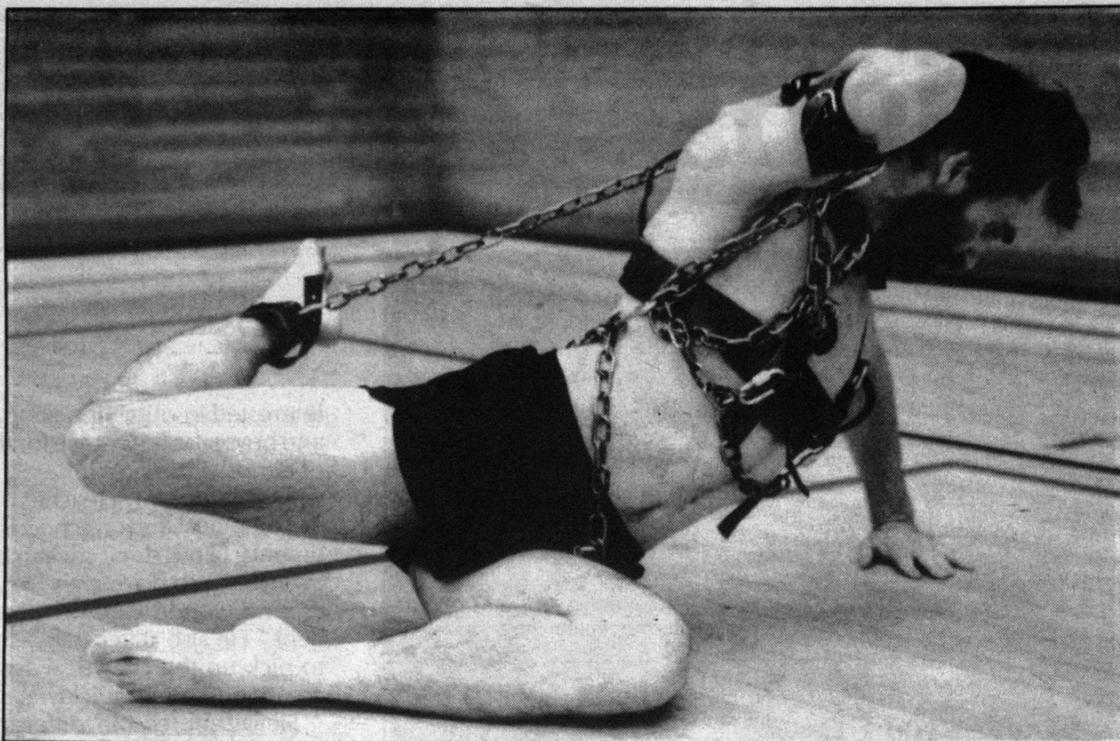
Panych explores the themes of death, sin, revelation, and enlightenment in *The Ejaculations*. "This is not meant to be a historical account of that period, but a psychological account of that era. There will be a mixture of darker and lighter elements."

"Donne saw man as a machine controlled by a spiritual force. Throughout his poetry there is a strong sense of man's struggle to free himself of his physical bonds, to reach beyond them to the spiritual."

Panych has included excerpts of Donne's poetry in the program. "There will be a pause between dances so that the audience can read the poem before the performance begins."

And what will the audience see? "We are doing something to *The Sunne Rising*, a poem about two lovers lamenting the passing of time. This is a warm and intimate piece. It opens on the two lovers in bed and the sun rises on them. They wake and perform a very physical, emotional dance."

Panych feels that this piece is particularly indicative of what was going on during the Renaissance. "Behind all the darkness and gloom there is a light, warm and invigorating attitude. They were cutting people's heads off, but they still had warmth," chuckles Panych.



Paul Menzies

On the darker end of the spectrum is the dance which accompanies *The Penance*. In this piece, the dancers flagellate themselves with whips attached to their clothing. "The

music is from a Renaissance mass; it's in the background."

Commenting on the religious overtones, Panych chuckled, "I'm from a Catholic

background. I think that a lot of intellectuals are turning to the Bible for thematic conventions."

Big band music swings down Broadway

Swings Down Broadway
Spitfire Band

review by Randal Smathers

Swings Down Broadway by the Spitfire Band is a unique album. It consists of ten Broadway show tunes, done in a swing-era style, by a contemporary band.

If you are familiar with original big-band music, the first thing that strikes you about this album is the sound quality. Gone is the impression that the music was recorded through a megaphone. The difference is impressive.

Most of the songs are instrumentals, with a big, solid, horn section leading the way. Instrumental solos are kept short and

worked well into the rest of the arrangement, and are never intrusive.

There are two fine vocal performances on this record. 'Swonderful' is sung by an unnamed male with a good, rich voice. There is an Andrews Sisters-style rendition of 'If I Were A Bell', and it really works well, mixing the vocals, horns and clarinet so smoothly.

It would be nice to include the names of the singers here, but the credits and liner notes are woefully short. I can tell you that Micky Erbe did the arrangements and is musical director, with Jackie Rae as producer. While both these men have done a fine job, it would be nice if they would share the spotlight. At least tell us who the soloists are.

That is the only problem I have with this album. Like most swing records, I find this one growing on me with each listen; there is a lot to hear.

While all the songs are from Broadway shows, they span forty one years of music. 'Swonderful' and 'Strike Up the Band' are from 1927, and the most recent selection, 'One', is from *Chorus Line*, 1968. Despite this range, all the music fits well together, with the swing style as the unifying factor.

If you know someone who likes big-band music, and you are looking at your Christmas list, this album is a good choice. Actually, anyone with diverse musical taste will get some enjoyment from the record, although head-bangers will want to give it a pass.

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