

TDT choreographers cover spectrum from stormy dreams to a calm dawn

By LISA HOPKINS

With an abundance of craft and a dash of wit, Toronto Dance Theatre's (TDT) performance at Premiere Dance Theatre last week had all the ingredients of a modern dance concert *extraordinaire*. TDT's unique blend of four gifted choreographers with a company of vivacious and versatile performers makes for a recipe that just can't miss.

Unfortunately, due to Toronto's inclement weather, I arrived late and was forced to remain in the lobby during Patricia Beatty's *Skyling*. One of the founding members and resident choreographers, Beatty's piece was met with a warm reception indicating that *Skyling* will continue to be a repertory favourite for years to come.

Christopher House's prowess for dynamic and innovative movement is lacking in his *Goblin Market*, as he allowed the dance to give way to the narrative. House distanced himself from the piece with the delicacy of his approach to the poem.

A spark of his special flair is reflected however in the goblin men who should be noted for their superb characterization and impressive technique. Aiko Suzuki's handsome set design lends itself well to the



TDT dancer Grace Miyagawa

dreamlike quality that House wanted to create.

David Earle's enduring fascination for the romantic is captured in his stormy new work, *Sunrise*. Set to the often overbearing but passionate Brahms Symphony Number One, Earle's sense of sculpture and form is

powerful and evocative. Though the piece lacked the polish and clarity that the music prescribes, and the dance might have been more powerful had the dancers finished looking back at the sunrise, Earle has come closer than ever to realizing his romantic vision.

Peter Randazzo's *Enter the Dawn*, set to the music of Charlie Haden, was a welcomed change of pace on the program. A bluesy, sophisticated solo, the piece was danced with sensual grace by the exquisite Merle Holloman.

The exuberant Christopher House sparked in his own work, *Animated Shorts*. Exuding boundless personality and charm to match his exceptional dancing, House is indeed the bright and shining star of Toronto Dance Theatre.

Extremities debunks myths about sexual assault in new production at Leah Posluns

By PAULETTE PEIROL

Rape is no longer a word in strictly legal terms. Instead, the act of forcing sexual intercourse upon another person is now defined as third level sexual assault in the Criminal Code of Canada.

This amendment, made by the passing of Bill C-127 in 1983, marks more than just a change in terminology. While rape stood for only the act of forced sexual intercourse, the term sexual assault stresses the aspect of assault, legally defined as "the intentional use of force against another person without his or her consent."

According to the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women (CACSW), "the new law stresses the violent nature of the sexual assault rather than its sexual nature."

When playwright William Mastrosimone first began writing *Extremities* in 1978, he too decided to focus on the violent nature of sexual assault. Yet instead of depicting only the rapist's violence, Mastrosimone delves into the bitter anger and desire for revenge that the victim often feels after the assault. In fact, no act of sexual intercourse ever appears in the play.

"Based on interviews of victims," Mastrosimone wrote in a subsequent essay, "the worst part of rape is not the physical. It is the fear, the threats, real or imagined, the degradation, the helplessness. *Extremities* has focused on the latter. Audiences often have to be reminded that no rape occurs in *Extremities*. But audiences often think that a rape has occurred because of the mental cruelty of the first scene."

Directed by Reva Stern, *Extremities* will be playing at Leah Posluns Theatre from January 29 to February 21. The play has previously garnered critical acclaim from productions in 13 different countries and a recent feature film starring Farrah Fawcett as the main character, Marjorie.

In the upcoming Leah Posluns Theatre production, 40-year-old

Susan Hogan, often seen on CTV's *Night Heat* show, plays the lead role, while Robert Morelli is cast as her would-be rapist, Raul. In the supporting roles of Terry and Patricia are actors Miriam Laurence and Catherine Hayos.

According to Stern, "the cloak of silence surrounding sexual assault is one of the greatest barriers to social change. There are many myths and lies about rape, and as a result, women end up believing that we are responsible for the assault . . . Our silence is men's protection."

Mastrosimone is one man who has deeply questioned the myths about sexual assault. He claims that through creating *Extremities*, which "came out of (him) like an overdue baby" in a single night of writing, he has "freed (himself) of the two lethal myths. One, that a woman causes rape, and two, that rape is for sex. A woman can never cause rape. That is a male excuse for the desire to rape projected into the victim. Rape is done to degrade, humiliate, and intimidate."

"It is a confusing issue because the tenderest act of man and woman is used to disguise the most brutal and sadistic. The extremities of the spectrum are brought together," Mastrosimone asserts.

He describes *Extremities* as beginning as a psychological drama between "the victim and the victimizer; the cager and the caged," who invariably must "form each other" through their interaction. Yet the playwright notes that in *Extremities*, this psychological focus soon becomes a moral question—"how does one deal with evil without becoming evil oneself?"

"Marjorie has choice," Mastrosimone wrote, "to act or not to act . . . On the one hand, her life is in jeopardy. On the other, (is) her sanity. She must act and act strongly, decisively. There is no help . . ."

According to the CACSW, only one out of every 10 sexually assaulted women report the crime. The character Marjorie, is one of the remaining nine who chooses silence. Yet unlike those who bury the experience only

to find it resurface in nightmares and fantasies of revenge, Marjorie confronts it by psychologically pummeling her attacker, Raul.

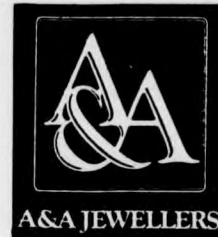
"I wanted to write a courtroom drama, not in court, but in a living room," Mastrosimone explained. "I wanted to recreate a psychic trial where all characters shift roles and become plaintiff, defendant, prosecutor, judge, jury, witness . . ."

Leah Poslun's production of *Extremities* will afford its audiences the opportunity to examine all of these roles from their theatre seats.

A satisfactory explanation for sexual assault has yet to be found. No one knows exactly why, for example, one out of every five Canadian women are sexually assaulted. It has yet to be explained why, from 1969-1981, sexual assaults with forced sexual intercourse increased 151 percent in Canada. Nor have the courts pinned down the reason why only two percent of accused rapists are convicted.

Leah Posluns Theatre has booked seven authorities on the subject to address these and other questions after evening performances. So far, speakers for various nights include:

- Feb. 5: *Pat Marshall* - Executive Director of Metro Action Committee on Violence against Women and Children.
- Feb. 7: *Lorraine Greaves* - Chairman of the National Action Committee on the Status of Women - Prostitution Committee.
- Feb. 8: *Orian Feldman* - Director of Community and Family Services at the Jewish Community Centre.
- Feb. 10: *Jill Jones and Kate Clark* - from "Education Wife Assault"
- Feb. 14: *Margo Pulford* - Sexual assault Co-ordinator of the Metropolitan Toronto Police.
- Feb. 18: *Susan Coles* - journalist for *Broadside* magazine.
- Feb. 19: *Georgine Nash* - psychologist.



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