



ZviDance

92nd Street Y Harkness Dance Festival

Ailey Citigroup Theater, New York

March 14 - 18, 2007

Reviewed by Naomi Abrahami

One does not just watch a dance by Zvi Gotheiner. One enters a world with its own internal logic, a sensual, organic world of movement, language, and images where one is pulled along by currents unseen and inevitable.

Gertrud, billed as a tribute to Gotheiner's mentor Gertrud Kraus, flows at a relatively calm pace. It opens with a single dancer receiving instructions to, for example, turn their head toward nine o'clock, walk three steps in the direction of two o'clock, etc. On the backdrop are the rows of mysterious "dancing stick figures" that Gotheiner, in the program notes, has told us Kraus kept in her notebook after she stopped choreographing. As the layers of the piece unfold through the repeated riff-like instructions from dancer to dancer, shifts of scenery, and dramatic vignettes, one gets the picture of an intense, demanding, unpredictable woman whose influence on the then-17 year old Gotheiner was enormous. Neither saccharine nor melodramatic, but laced with affection and humor, *Gertrud* transcends the personal, evolving into a meditation on the process of becoming an artist and the act of creation.

A rhythmic, driving, propulsive piece, *Les Noces* (marriage or wedding party) provided a welcome contrast to the quieter, more reflective *Gertrud*. Once again, Gotheiner allows his work time to unfold. A woman sitting alone on a bench is called to movement by a sudden, siren-like sound. Others join her. The men and women face each other on low, black benches. Touching one another's hair, they tentatively check one another out. Various couplings are tried on and discarded. Pairs form: men and women, women together, men together. Conflict arises and is resolved. A single couple is chosen and the dancers unite in celebration, forming a circle that keeps turning even when broken. Space is left for the missing person to return.

In its affirmation of humanity, *Les Noces* might remind the viewer of Martha Graham's *Acts of Light*, with its final stage full of dancers striving separately, but in unison, toward a common vision. Here, as the dancers of the wedding party rush to place benches beneath the feet of the bride and groom as they symbolically walk down the aisle, we are left with the image of a community supporting its own on an unknown journey to which even the main players are blind. Yet, with confidence and hope they walk forward into the future.