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THE NEW YORK

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GAMBA PREDICTS 'DANS-EZ - No. 1'

Michael Gamba, managing director of Gamba Limited, predicted at a board meeting last week that the Dans-ez soft fresh cotton stretch leotards and tights of today are the dance garments of the future.

WHAT EVERYONE HAS BEEN WAITING FOR

These revolutionary cotton fresh garments are exactly what everyone has been waiting for. Being made of almost 70% soft comfortable cotton they allow the skin to breath naturally by absorbing perspiration, yet because of Duponts' stretchy Lycra* keep their figure flattering shape all day.

BEAUTIFUL CUT NATURAL FREEDOM

Another reason why Dans-ez has set the standard for dance garments to come, is their beautiful cut. Teachers and dancers are constantly commenting on the incredible 'comfy' second-skin type fit, lovely long leg line that doesn't ride up the bottom and the way the leotards encourage a wonderful feeling of natural freedom.

MOST DESIRED STYLES

With Dans-ez offering four of the most desired leotard styles there is certainly a leotard to please nearly everyone. Among them is the exciting very thin shoulder strapped low extra open back camisole model called *MANOU*. There are also the specially designed low front extra open back styles available with either narrow shoulder straps or 3/4 sleeves.

FOOTLESS, STIRRUPED OR FOOTED—NO MORE BAGGY KNEES

Another long awaited innovation that places the Dans-ez Cotton/Lycra garments years ahead of other manufacturers is their tights.



Manola Asensio and Alain Dubreuil rehearsing L.F.B.'s production of Ronald Hynd's 'Nutcracker', in their Dans-ez cotton-stretch leotards and tights.

They simply do not bag at the knees, even after long days of classes and rehearsals. These amazing tights also come in the same eight colours as the leotards.

Dans-ez are available from Taffy's 701 Beta Drive, Cleveland, Ohio 44143 ATLANTA • BOSTON • CLEVELAND • DALLAS • SALT LAKE and in NEW YORK from CAPEZIO Dance Shop, 755, 7th Ave, at 50th St., Tel: 245 2130 and CAPEZIO Fashion Shop, 1855 Broadway at 61st St., Tel: 246 4944. Also throughout the world from GAMBA agents.

*Lycra is Du Pont's registered trade mark for its elastane fibre.

films: the close-up, the dissolve, and martha graham

by john mueller

The eighty-nine-minute program on the Martha Graham Dance Company, telecast on PBS' "Dance in America" series in spring 1976, is now available on 16mm color film. The program was directed by Merrill Brockway and features the company in five Graham works plus an excerpt from a sixth.

In my last column I discussed the performances of *Appalachian Spring* and *Frontier* on this important new film. This time out I'd like to comment on the rest of the film.

Adorations. This new dance work was apparently partly choreographed with the camera in mind—"Dance in America," in fact, commissioned it. Perhaps because of that it is the most thoroughly successful dance on the film from the standpoint of performance and of camera direction.

The work is an unpretentious, rather innocuous demonstration of the Graham technique of the 1970s, much of it in unison or for solo dancer. It has no precise spatial definition and the camera can roam and investigate at will without damage. In addition the rather monumental set, so cluttering when used in stage performance, is attractively reduced in proportion to the vast space defined by Brockway's cameras.

The close-up: Lamentation and Cave of the Heart. Occasionally close-ups in dance films can be really beautiful. In the classic 1934 film of Doris Humphrey's *Air for the G-String* there are a couple of close-ups where a bit of the choreography is lost off camera, but Humphrey's face and demeanor are so devastatingly exquisite and sensuous, that any choreographic loss is more than compensated for.

But that's unusual.

Peggy Lyman dances Graham's 1930 solo *Lamentation* on the "Dance in America" film and Takako Asakawa performs Medea's dance of vengeance from the 1946 Graham classic *Cave of the Heart*. Both use close-ups rather extensively (no doubt entirely with Graham's approval) and that, in my opinion, is unfortunate.

On stage *Lamentation* almost looks as if it were choreographed for the photographer. The solo fits the camera frame perfectly. The dancer is seated on a stool, nearly encased in a shroud of stretch fabric, and the choreography consists of various manipulations of the fabric in ways that suggest mourning.

To capture the choreography one could simply fit the dancer in the frame with perhaps some minor pulling-back when the soloist stretches to full height. The whole five-minute solo could be done in a single take and the choreography, in both its larger and more subtle aspects, would speak as effectively on film as it does on the stage. To do that requires a lot of trust, however: trust in the choreography and in the intelligence and perceptive powers of the audience.

Instead the solo is punctuated by a number of close-ups on this film that serve only to distract and disorient. Worse—in some of these close-ups Lyman is asked to mug mournfully, as if there were no confidence the choreography could communicate its point alone. (There is a 1943 film available showing Graham dancing this work,

a series of camera studies. It is pretty unsatisfactory as a film but it does clearly show that Graham herself did not feel she needed obvious facial expressions in this extraordinary miniature at that time.)

Close-ups also mistreat the solo from *Cave of the Heart*. Asakawa's facial contortions seem an unfortunate and unnecessary aspect of the performance for the camera to emphasize.

The *Cave of the Heart* solo is the only excerpt on the film, and its inclusion suggests how tightly constructed Graham's masterworks are, how internally interdependent. It is of course valuable to have this solo available for repeated perusal, but it is remarkable how much of its point and impact is lost when it is seen out of context.

Diversion of Angels. This ebullient group work from 1948 is given an excellent performance on the film by a cast led by Peggy Lyman and Peter Sparling as the white couple, Elisa Monte and Tim Wengerd as the yellow couple, and Takako Asakawa and David Hatch Walker as the red couple. Indeed, because Asakawa and Hatch Walker have since left the company, the film has already become an important historical document in preserving their superb performances.

Regrettably, however, the piece has been rather over-directed in its translation to television. *Diversion of Angels* features a fixed space in which the dancers meet and part, play and pose. They burst into the space, dart across it, tarry in it under their own impetus and impulse.

To best reflect this choreographic point it would seem the camera ought to remain rather passive, quietly defining the space while leaving the movement up to the dancers. A camera in the center and somewhat high would probably be ideal for this.

Instead, however, the direction is very busy—cutting from one angle to another and constantly disorienting the viewer. The camera discovers or telegraphs entrances (or in some cases obscures them) rather than simply letting them happen by choreographic necessity. Most damaged are the wonderful diagonal progressions of Asakawa. Instead of letting her slice her way across the space the way she does on stage, the camera suddenly cuts to pick her up as she is entering and then follows her progress, undercutting the surprise and the delight of her role.

Another problem arises from the reliance on the distance-exaggerating wide-angle lens. The lens serves Brockway well in *Appalachian Spring* where it adds to the unbounded, spacious, open-ended feeling that is so important to that work. In *Diversion of Angels*, however, it is often harmful to the choreographic point. In particular it tends to make the statue-like poses of the white couple too distant from the other dancers.

One final crotchety complaint. It seems to me a dissolve should be treated as a special effect, as significant in its way as turning the camera upside down, reverting to slow motion, or splitting the screen. A dissolve, particularly when it occurs between scenes or between sections of a work, implies a passage or disorientation of time—it may even have a kind of dream-like effect. It is not just a pretty way to cut from one camera to another and I don't think it should be used unless there is some kind of special point to be made.

Brockway seems to like to use dissolves from time to time for no apparent reason other than to add a bit of variety to the directorial texture. This, I would suggest, is a mistake.

Martha Graham Dance Company (eighty-nine minutes, color) can be rented for \$27, purchased for \$665 from Audio-Visual Center, Indiana U., Bloomington 47401; (812) 337-8087. □



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