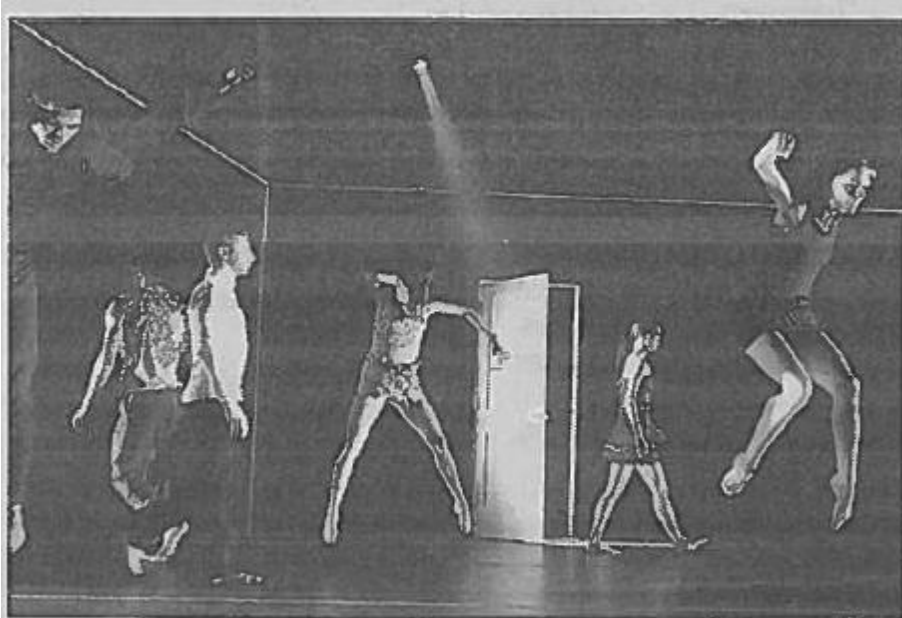


3 choreographers' pieces

almost in lockstep

REVIEW | A certain sameness to Cedar Lake ballet program



The Cedar Lake Contemporary Ballet dancers used walls and doors to explore isolation in Didy Veldman's "frame of view."

BY HEDY WEISS

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Choreographic style can be contagious. Consider the three pieces by three different dancemakers that comprised the program performed at the Auditorium Theatre this weekend by the bravura dancers of New York-based Cedar Lake Contemporary Ballet.

Had any one of them been on a more varied program it would have been astonishing — for the brilliance and complexity of the partnering, for the way the movement invariably established a mood, for the sophisticated deployment of the music. But seen one after another, these works, by choreographers from Norway (Jo Stromgren), Canada (Crystal Pite) and the Netherlands (Didy Veldman), not only began to look and feel too much like one another, but often seemed like clones of such other contemporary masters as Ohad Naharin and Leon Lightfoot. And ultimately there was too much of a good thing (and of the push-pull molding style of contact improvisational movement), despite the invariably astonishing dancing.

All three pieces on the mixed bill dealt with the complexities of human relationships and the near impossibility of communicating about matters of love and sex. Alienation appeared to rule.

In Stromgren's "Sunday, Again," we first see a couple whose efforts to connect on a Sunday morning end up being more hostile (even brutal on the man's part) than loving. The sinewy but fluid Acacia Schachte was a marvel, appearing to float as she was partnered, superbly, by Jason Kittelberger. Gradually, the whole ensemble joined in, with various bits of socializing (including a funny but overextended lesbian encounter) as some played badminton, some flirted, some seemed to pray, and no one was quite content. All this was set to music by Bach that cleverly underscored or comically counterpointed the action.

Pite's "Ten Duets on a Theme of Rescue," set to Cliff Martinez's softly otherworldly soundtrack for "Solaris," was more emotionally probing, as five dancers (Jubal Battisti, Jon Bond, Soojin Choi, Nickemil Concepcion and Ebony Williams) seamlessly recombined to enact push-pull relationships. Two men wrestled. A man frantically raced in

place trying to catch up with a woman who moved easily. Another couple focused on a woman in turmoil who was gently quieted by a man. Designer Jim French's 14 standing lamps pierced the darkness and raised the emotional heat. Pite is a master of mood.

Veldman's elaborate "frame of view" was set to seven wildly different pieces of music, from classical to pop. Again, this was a work about emotional isolation, with Miriam Buether's set enabling the dancers to literally climb the walls and hide behind doors in their often ambivalent efforts to connect. The nine dancers were remarkable.