

THE KITCHEN

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Dance: 'Mix' Of Miss Fenley At the Kitchen

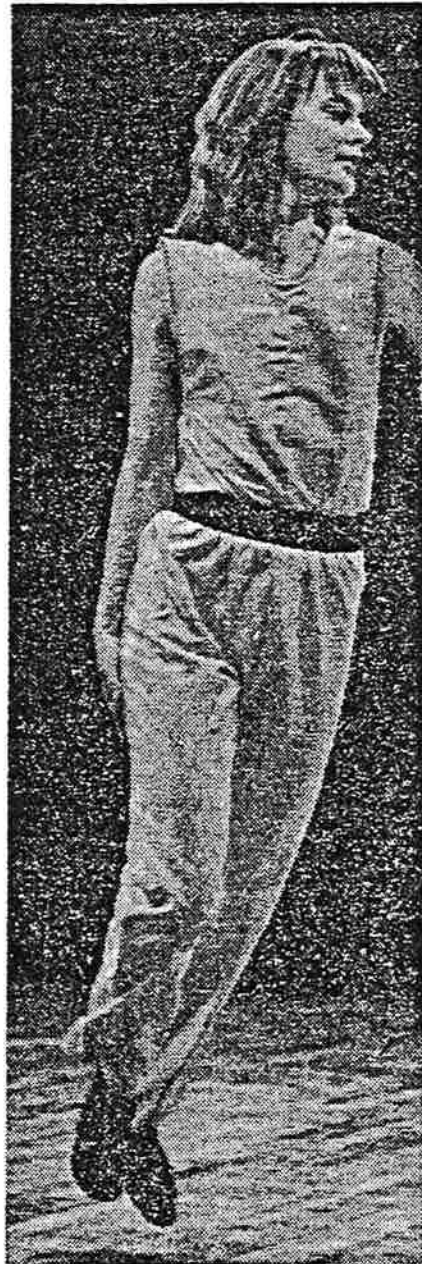
Dancers' midperformance grins tend to be self-conscious, but those of Melissa Fenley and Dancers, performing Miss Fenley's new "Mix" on Thursday at the Kitchen, had the spontaneity of children at play. And, with its rigid rules, split-second timing and repetitiveness, "Mix" was very like a game devised by a precocious child.

Dressed in unflattering belted, silky top and trousers, four dancers jogged, bounced and hopped nonstop for 50 minutes through changing, symmetrical patterns in a rectangular space bound by the loft's four pillars. They kept an insistent four-quarter rhythm going by clapping, stamping, grinding and beating sand blocks together and shaking maracas. The sounds were amplified slightly and occasionally distorted in their time values by the use of an overhead microphone, echo machine and phase shifter. A demanding game, for the smallest slip could instantly be detected.

Miss Fenley, a young choreographer who has been working in New York for four years, has considerable ingenuity. Her weaving in of snaking, joining arms and fleeting bursts of silence or muted sound was witty, and for the first half-hour or so, "Mix" held the attention with its abstruse patterns and its look of a stylish square dance. But after that, the dance began to pall. Miss Fenley may be doing for the clap and bounce what Laura Dean did for the spitt, but, lacking that simplicity, "Mix" became less hypnotic as it continued.

Miss Fenley was joined by John Bernd, Kate McLaughlin and Elizabeth Streb. That any of them finished without collapsing was a testament to their indestructibility. But the four also demonstrated unusual quickness and agility, and those smiles added a welcome note of human imperfection and individuality — Miss Fenley's reflective, Mr. Bernd's easygoing, Miss McLaughlin's slow-breaking, and Miss Streb's covertly wicked. "Mix" may be seen through tomorrow at the Kitchen.

JENNIFER DUNNING



Nathaniel Tileston

Melissa Fenley