

THE KITCHEN

Video Music Dance Performance Film Literature

Modern Muses

By Deborah Jowitt

John Kelly

Maybe It's Cold Outside

At the Kitchen

February 14 through 24

Feld Ballets/NY

Eliot Feld's *Ion*, *Savage Glimpse*,

Fauna, and *Common Ground*

At the Joyce Theater, 175

Eighth Avenue, 242-0800

To March 10

Ice Theatre of New York

Ann Carlson's *Angel*

At Rockefeller Center Rink

February 13

Unlike Carbone 14's *Le Dortoir*—seen at BAM this past fall—John Kelly's view of the boarding school as incubator does not begin with a nostalgia-drenched poetic monologue. Nor does Huck Snyder's set for Kelly's *Maybe It's Cold Outside* present a somberly luminous view of the school you're glad you never went to. Snyder's fanciful design includes three giant clocks—one painted on the floor, one that appears to be sinking into the floor, and one hanging, partly out of sight. There are big numbers, a flat with roses painted on it, and sets of parallel cords hung diagonally and vertically. Part cage, part gameboard. Which pretty well sums up school for a lot of people.

The cast enters simply one by one in school uniforms. We recognize them—or think we do—right away: the smart, trim, slightly smug little blond (Vivian Trimble); the big, bluff softie (Byron Suber); the socially precocious one—you can guess she'll be the first to light up at recess (Marleen Menard); the happy, expectant budding-artist type (Kelly); and the awkward one with glasses and deep, troubling urges (Kyle deCamp).

Second grade is economically laid out in an endearing rhythmic sequence of bemused swaying on high benches, hand raising, little

outbursts of teasing and sulking. Recess means hopscotch, Indian wrestling, swearing friendship in blood, experimental crotch-grabbing. In seventh grade (seconds later), the benches are lower in relation to the pupils, and the swaying, hand-raising sequence acquires a sensuous slowness and a desire on the part of the kids to loll back on each other. All but two flunk French drill and have to wear dunce caps. The two celebrate with gauche dances while everyone else aims black looks and grim lunges at them.

This is all very good theater—odd enough to hold your interest, true enough to engage your heart. And the performers never resort to cute manners to assure you that they are children.

Night brings startling fantasies. In their beds, hidden behind curtains or temporarily silhouetted, the adolescents sleep, with occasional trips to an offstage bathroom or to each other's beds for a little sex play. We see their dreams in eerie, polished black-and-white films by Anthony Chase. DeCamp dreams of pushing an impossibly heavy cart with a body on it through a ravaged city; Menard is being drowned in a bathtub; Trimble puts herself and Kelly kissing, in 17th century finery; Kelly sits in a hospital waiting room, and at the end, a wash of red flows over his black-and-white face.

Night also brings music. Crouched on the floor in his underwear, Kelly, his face now stained red, sings in his magical alto Amina's aria from Bellini's *La Sonnambula*, while his unseen schoolmates behind their curtains intone the hushed, somber choruses.

The lament for a dead beloved is beautiful, wrenching, although it's hard to tie it to what came before and what follows. What follows is a quick graduation and a somewhat perfunctory after-

math—this last also difficult to relate to the rest of the piece. Two of the women, smartly dressed, sit at a table talking. Kelly spins. Suber scribbles names frantically on a chart while, in an overhead projection, numbers mount up. DeCamp struggles to pull up those people who fall. But the ending is

sketchy and confusing compared to the sweaty, inchoate emotions of the school scenes and the rich, haunted singing.



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