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DANCE REVIEW

As the Thinkers Stand Still, Their Thoughts Step Lively

By JACK ANDERSON

First, no one's mother was refrigerated in Tere O'Connor's "Frozen Mommy." But he repeatedly froze his cast of five dancers: Hilary Clark, Erin Gerken, Heather Olson, Matthew Rogers and Christopher Williams. Motionlessness became as important as movement in this new work, which Tere O'Connor Dance, the choreographer's company, presented Thursday night at the Kitchen in Chelsea.

The production, all stops and starts, was surprising and thought-provoking. Mr. O'Connor kept his dancers moving to occasional bits of taped sounds that he and James F. Baker composed. Then he would suddenly render everyone immobile. As the work progressed, the frequent pauses began to suggest that the performers were still dancing even though their bodies stayed still. That is, their thoughts were moving.

But what were they thinking about? And who were the dancers supposed to be? Were they always fictive characters invented by Mr. O'Connor? Or were any of the emotions the steps expressed the dancers' own? And while they just stood, was Mr. O'Connor telling them what to think? Or could they think about anything they wished?

Mr. O'Connor delighted in playing

'Frozen Mommy'

Tere O'Connor Dance

games with reality and illusion.

When he had dancers say "Step" and "Enter" as they stepped and entered, he was obviously having fun with contrivances. But when Mr. Rogers staggered, as if unable to maintain his balance, or when all the dancers paused to giggle softly to themselves or to laugh at one another, what dramatic situations was Mr. O'Connor trying to establish?

At one point, everyone posed indolently, as if falling asleep standing up. Moments later, Mr. Williams sank to the floor, and Mr. Rogers pushed him to and fro as if he had become a floppy rag doll. Sequences of this sort were often absurdly comic.

But the human relationships Mr. O'Connor showed in them also had serious emotional implications.

"Frozen Mommy" came to a chilling conclusion. All five dancers just stood with right hand on right hip. They looked lost in thought. They stayed lost, remaining frozen in their poses for what seemed an eternity. Brian MacDevitt's bright white lighting beat down upon them. At last, the lights started to dim and Mr. Rogers toppled over, sobbing. "Frozen Mommy" had thawed out with strong, but enigmatic, feelings.