

THE KITCHEN

CENTER FOR
VIDEO, MUSIC
AND DANCE

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Dance: 'Out of Ordinary'

By JACK ANDERSON

If one can easily imagine someone complaining after a concert by Johanna Boyce, "But I could dance that well," one can just as easily imagine Miss Boyce sweetly replying, "Then why don't you?"

As a choreographer, Miss Boyce loves the ordinary — so much so that her company, Boyce Dances, is composed of ordinary people for whom dance is an avocation. Yet they can all move. "And so can anyone," Miss Boyce might add, given her apparent faith in the human body.

At Thursday night's concert by Boyce Dances at the Kitchen, a long dance work called "Out of the Ordinary" was preceded by a film titled "A Weekend Spent Filming It." But the entire concert was "Out of the Ordinary" in several senses, for whereas the choreography derived from ordinary activities, it eventually proved extraordinary.

At first in the film Miss Boyce's dancers were barely visible among the rocks of Wyoming Island in the St. Lawrence Seaway. They were, quite literally, part of the ordinary natural landscape. Next, they were shown fishing and enjoying games of charades, and they worked and played with equal eagerness. Still later, they were swimming in the nude, their nudity emphasizing the human body as a marvelous physical instrument. But the fact that they were plunging into obviously cold water served as a reminder that the real world is not all sweetness and light.

In the dance that followed, 10 partly clothed performers rolled and hopped across the space, engaged in Indian wrestling and games of tag, and bounced as if on trampolines, their actions possessing the same intensity as the film's work and play sequences. Fully clothed, they did tricks with coins like parlor entertainers. Then they put on tap shoes and clattered away.

Although they were not veteran hoofers, their tap dancing was at least

slightly out of the ordinary. And when two dancers appeared to use rubber bands as dental floss and others used mittens as boxing gloves and rolled-up clothes as footballs, the objects may have been ordinary, but they were put to decidedly odd uses. Miss Boyce had gradually taken her dancers beyond simple realism. Certain initially puzzling or even annoying aspects about the accompaniment she employed — the repetition of nonsense syllables during the film and the way her dancers often sang "ta-ta-ta" as they moved — now seemed hints of her intention to venture into artifice.

For Miss Boyce, the extraordinary was rooted in the ordinary, and the energy of dance was akin to that of work and play. What's more, she charmingly implied that anybody's body can, with diligence, be a dancing body.

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