

Tell Me a Story - and Make It Hot

By Deborah Jowitt

SYDNEY DANCE COMPANY. At City Center (March 20 to 31). Graeme Murphy's *Some Rooms*.

RALPH LEMON/CROSS PERFORMANCE. At Dance Theater Workshop (March 7 to 10). *Folktales*.

JOAN MILLER'S DANCE PLAYERS. At the Joyce Theater (March 13 to 17). Miller's *Manhattan Thoroughfare*; *Macho Madness/Macho Mystique*; *Divertissement #1*; *Avon Calling*; *Divertissement #2*; *Lyric Song ... Lyric Dance*; also Rael Lamb's *Butterfly*.

JIM SELF AND DANCERS, WITH RICHARD ELOVICH. At the Kitchen (March 21 to 24). Self's *No Memory* and excerpt from *Look Out*, Self and Richard Elovich's *New Zuyder Zee*.

New Zuyder Zee, created by Jim Self and writer Richard Elovich, with music by A. Leroy, is a real nonlinear play, and a fascinating one, that proceeds erratically backward in time, through Lauren Stringer's handsome curtains, one painted with portraits from the family album we hear drily described by a woman (Butch Walker), evidently in prison, being visited by her son (Billy Harris). A toy horse grows into a ridable giant. Rob Besserer, Keith Sabado, and Self become the raunchy preadolescent boys the heroine hung out with one summer, Teri Weksler, a girlfriend, or perhaps, at times, an alter ego. Later, there's a movie they're all making, and gradually the talk turns to explosives. The woman hadn't thought, she says, about people getting hurt. The photos she's been snapping for her collection amount to a tale of growing up fierce in the '60s. "Zuyder Zee is now Islemere," they chant the mystic nursery rhyme as if it were "Allee, allee in free." Except that the surviving Weatherwoman is behind bars. All this emerges with oblique force through dancing that—though never gestural—has the ferocity and attentiveness of drama, and recollections, quietly—wonderfully—spoken by Walker, which unlock all kinds of doors. You can pave over the sea, but the water keeps rising.

No Memory is wordlessly dramatic and almost too bizarre for comfort. The dance opens in silence. Scott Johnson's score opens with chattering voices, then slides into bright, busy tunefulness. Naomi Lane's costumes suggest updated commedia dell'arte (floppy hats and all), maybe Bal des Artistes chic of yesteryear. Rob Besserer and Teri Weksler are disaffected to the point of limpness—handsome dumb puppets who once meant something to each other. Maybe. Keith Sabado and Louise Burns frame them with nearly constant symmetry—prancing downstage, meeting in the middle, bowing back, enjoying each other's company. Busy, antic twins, their main function seems either to prod the other two into life, or to convince us that Besserer and Weksler are fascinating people doing fascinating things. "Just look at that! Did you ever see anything so clever?" they seem to be saying as the others parade glassily about, "What a great show!" ■