



JAMES HAMILTON

David Warrilow in performance: the juxtaposition of punk and classical styles

The Tradition of the Old

By Sally Banes

PERFORMANCE

IS 60 MINUTES ENOUGH? A performance by Bob Berky, Fred Garbo Garver, and Michael Moschen. Presented by Economy Tires Theater at DTW, 219 West 19th Street, 924-0077. Through May 1.

MOMENTS IN CLASSICAL LITERATURE. A performance by David Warrilow. Presented by the Kitchen, 484 Broome Street, 925-3615. April 16-18.

David Warrilow's evenings were essen-

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tially dramatic readings of *Hamlet*, Jules Laforgue's "Essay on Hamlet," Samuel Beckett, the Song of Songs. What made it avant-garde? Warrilow juxtaposed his elegant oratory with the banal lyrics and jittery ebullience of a New Wave band, whose members—Johann Carlo, Henry Stramm, Michael Butler, Bruce Cross, Vincent Gallo, and Val Kilmer—are also actors with whom Warrilow recently appeared in Minneapolis production of Liviu Ciulea's *As You Like It*. Warrilow doesn't need to substitute virtuosity for content. His texts themselves shake the soul, but his eloquence makes them live even more profoundly. The juxtaposition of punk and

classical styles added humor and another kind of virtuosity, and, rather than subverting the actor's role, set it off like a jewel.

Performances like these raise new questions about how we judge avant-garde art. Should we have the same standards for a chamber version of a circus, seen in a downtown theater, that we have for Ringling Brothers and Barnum, and Bailey? If so, won't the chamber version inevitably fall short, simply on structural grounds? If what the audience in downtown theaters wants is virtuosity, why not buy tickets to see Ringling Brothers and Broadway plays? Can transferring the classics to new venues give old traditions new values?