

THE KITCHEN

CENTER FOR
VIDEO, MUSIC
AND DANCE

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Dance: *By Mary Overlie*

By JACK ANDERSON

So why was "Hero" called "Hero?" That's hard to say. But there are things that can easily be said about the work for 15 dancers that was presented Friday night at the Kitchen. Choreographed by Mary Overlie, with the assistance of Nina Martin and Wendell Beavers, it lasted 45 minutes and emphasized blocs of dancers. Devoid of gestural frills, it was rugged in movement quality and invigorating to watch.

It began with figures going slowly in and out of the two doors at the back of the Kitchen. Small groups of dancers with outstretched arms sidestepped their way across the performing space until they were stopped by a wall. While they made their solemn progress, two women ran lightly. Then an ensemble of 10 dancers rushed in and kept positioning and repositioning themselves in sequences of starts and stops that alternated jogging with massive group formations. Near the end of the piece, all 15 dancers crept and hunched like caterpillars across the floor and later rolled over and over in unison.

Despite Miss Overlie's concern for mass movement, she often contrasted large ensembles with a trio consisting of Joanne Tilleman, Miss Martin and Mr. Beavers. These three dancers tumbled about and explored situations involving mutual support by balancing and carrying one another. Not only did Mr. Beavers partner the women, they also picked him up and held him when he jumped into their arms.

"Hero" contained other contrasts, as well — contrasts between large-scaled ensemble movement and the almost informal behavior of individuals who detached themselves from the ensemble. At one point, however, 12 dancers made what might ordinarily look like casual gestures, except that when they were made by so many people all at once they no longer seemed casual.

Everything was grand about "Hero." Bold in outline, its choreographic designs were always clear and although it depicted nothing specific, its formations of dancers suggested sculptural groupings in some civic plaza. So perhaps that may explain why "Hero" was called "Hero."

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