

YANNI LIVE

With 50-Piece Orchestra

June 8-13

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Dance in Review

■ Always on guard in two mysterious works ■ A full-evening drama of an everyday hero ■ Anger and serenity from a new cast in 'Voluntaries.'

Susan Rethorst

The Kitchen

The dancers in the two works that Susan Rethorst presented on Saturday night appeared to be always on guard, as if they expected something momentous to happen. No apocalypse ever occurred. Nevertheless, Ms. Rethorst made her choreographic states of disquiet fascinating.

Each piece was a dance for eight people, but not the same eight. The new "Grey Marie" had an all-female cast: Susan Braham, Maureen Ellenhorn, Jeanette Engler, Erin Fitzgerald, Cristina Latici, Jodi Melnick, Vicky Shick and Ms. Rethorst. The choreography made them look tense and alert. Although this wariness was also contrasted with some slouches and shrugs, no one fully relaxed.

Most of "Grey-Marie" was performed in silence. Then, near the conclusion, bits of music by René Aubrey and Brahms were heard on tape. The composition by Brahms was his familiar "Lullaby." Yet it was hard to imagine that the nervous women this dance depicted would ever have an untroubled sleep.

Ms. Braham, Ms. Fitzgerald, Ms. Latici, Ms. Rethorst and Ms. Shick also performed in "Beau Regard," which dates from 1989. They were eventually joined by Christopher Caines, Tom Hackley and Conor McTeague. Despite the cast of eight, there were often only two or three dancers onstage. They seemed ready to confront one another in some emotional revelation. There were also strange scenes in which they carried spoons in their hands and their mouths.

Because no revelations were actually made and the rituals with the spoons remained unexplained, it was occasionally possible to feel that Ms. Rethorst was doing little more than presenting one odd non sequitur after another. Fortunately, the sheer mysteriousness of her choreography made it compelling. And her enigmas were enhanced by the hazy lighting of Michael Giannitti and an accompaniment that included a collage of taped music and a shimmering score by Bill Ruyle played live by Dana Friedl, violinist; Tomas Ulrich, cellist, and Mr. Ruyle, percussionist.

JACK ANDERSON

the dramatic theater in "Walter's Finest Hours," seen on Saturday night. Dancers seem to be turning to drama these days. But Ms. Marshall's work has tended to be dramatic vignettes from the start. What is a revelation is Ms. Marshall's gifts as a writer and a director. "Walter's Finest Hours" is a first purely theatrical effort but it has the confidence and sensitivity of long practice.

The full-evening piece takes place in a nursing home where Walter, a stroke victim with aphasia, is visited daily by his daughter Helen. She tries to steer him through the present, but it is a tough, perhaps impossible task, for this is a Walter Mitty who lives in a much more vivid past full of fantasies. Many of his dreams are about recurrent rescues of his wife, Madeline, a glamorous actress who in real life may have had a stroke herself. The actors shift seamlessly from nursing home to Madeline's predicaments as well as Walter's imagined rescues of individuals and whole populations from a variety of catastrophes.

For all the wildness of Walter's dreams, Ms. Marshall and her superb performers suggest that the dreams are rooted in a valor as humdrum as that of the daughter as she tries repeatedly to reach him. Branislav Tomich, the only actor in the cast, slips in and out of Walter's many worlds with astonishing grace. His heroes are comically modest in their swash-buckling. His chair-bound patient, ashen and stubborn, is a heroic vessel of memories and hallucinations.

Heidi Michel, whose looks and mannerisms are eerily reminiscent of Meryl Streep's, is loving and perturbed in the sick room and romps through Walter's fantasies in many supporting roles. Eileen Thomas is a sturdily seductive Madeline, tender at moments and always a relentless ghost. But good as they all are, the irresistible David Neumann nearly steals the show as Howard, an unfailingly cheerful young private nurse in high-top sneakers, with an unseen girlfriend named Gloria. Mr. Neumann also plays what seems to be another hundred male and female fantasy characters, including the shyly nubile lasses in charge of Walter's imagined convalescences after his brave deeds fell him and a translator who renders one of Walter's award-acceptance speeches into perfect Russian-Italian-German with smatterings of Danish and English thrown in.

But the honors of the evening go to Ms. Marshall, who builds inexorably to a sudden, haunting end. The incidental choreography is also by her, set to music by Pauline Oliveros that fits the play like a silk glove. Paul Clay created the effective lighting. The sets and costumes, both ingen-

'Walter's Finest Hours'

Susan Marshall
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