



— Photo by DONA ANN MCADAMS

**KAREN FINLEY** performs 'The Constant State of Desire' at the Kitchen, an alternative performance space.



**Patti Dobrowolski**, right, performs in *Inside Out* at the Dance Theater Workshop.

PETER KUHN'S.

and posters and announcements of events. A door leads to a much smaller room, pitch black except for a flickering television screen against one wall. The room may be empty, or three or four chairs may be occupied. People come and go throughout the afternoon, seeing pieces that range from the totally abstract to relatively straight made-for-TV "thrillers" by Jean Luc Godard. Even with advance listings, the only thing certain is that prime-time TV was never like this.

Downstairs in the same building, the Kitchen's main stage is a showcase for performance art. Here you'll find extravagant theatrical pieces, improvisational new music, multiple-monitor video and regularly scheduled dance. Operating within modest means, experimental dance troupes make do with limited



— Photo by ROBERT RAGAINI

**THE EAR INN**, built in 1817, has its neon sign modified to suit its current function.

personnel, basic costumes, minimal sets. They work when and where they can, in unadorned lofts as well as rooms designed specifically for the purpose.

#### **Sinuous, acrobatic movements**

One evening at Dance Theater Workshop, nine women in black, bare arms lit from above, moved in place. Subgroups of three and four danced in unison, changing partners, creating waves of slowly shifting patterns. Later, on the empty stage, two dancers twisted and turned on the floor, touching, separating, joining together to come to rest with arms, legs, torsos locked in single, surprising shapes. To the sound track of electronically modified flutes, they danced with sinuous, acrobatic movements, their bodies forming a sequence of lovely, unified structures.

The best dance performances are good indeed and should be seen even by those who were never interested in ballet. Innovative dance in New York is one of the great rewards for

those who go beyond the newspaper ads to find what's playing in town.

Which is not to say that the papers never indicate where lesser known events take place. The Saturday New York Times has a special page devoted to musical performances presented the following day in the city's churches. Throughout the year, but especially on church holidays, professional choirs perform oratorios, masses, the best classical vocal music in churches of all denominations.

One that is missing from the list is the Washington Square Church, perhaps because of its long-time commitment to far left politics. Perhaps it's because of its somewhat disreputable appearance — or it may be that the offerings are most often secular in nature.

The church has heard the music of all nations: saxophone players from India, fold-rock singers from Britain, flutists from Ecuador. It has hosted Afro-French musicians from rural Louisiana, jazz musicians from major cities, and on several occasions, gospel singers from exotic Brooklyn.

#### **Inspired singing**

One night a packed, mostly white, house clapped in rhythm while two male quintets let loose a barrage of inspired singing that rocked the old church to its foundations. Interspersing their songs with heart-felt exhortations to the Lord, these men, none of them young, vividly demonstrated the links between their music and the soul music of today. When the concert was over, they and the audience were exhausted, exhilarated and sorry that it had to end.

Participating in New York's rich and varied non-traditional cultural life is like going on an archeological expedition. To discover what's beneath the surface, you have to dig. Each succeeding layer yields its own particular treasures; each has its own distinct characteristics, history and style.