

THE KITCHEN

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Edouard Lock and Dancers.
The Kitchen (October).

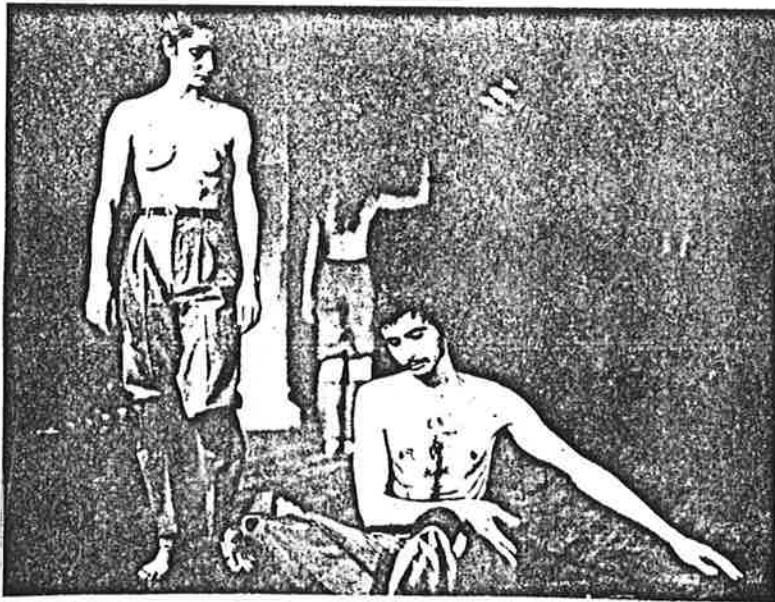
Marta Renzi and Dancers.
The Kitchen (January).

All of these choreographers embrace theatre. They put movement into dramatic contexts, employing the full range of theatrical conventions from music, costumes, and decor to character and story as narrative. In these dances, kinetic invention is only one element among many.

There are two major questions about such work. Is it reactionary? The use of familiar forms and methods may be part of the current conservative careerism; it may also be a natural reaction to some twenty years of stripped-down dance. Secondly, is it only entertainment? Theatre in dance implies entertainment, and that imprecise term has historically meant dance which fails to push its limits or challenge its audience. But theatre-dance can be a style as difficult to pull off as process, improvisational, or architectural dance.

Edouard Lock and company are from Montreal, and their *Lily Marlene in the Jungle* exemplified a particularly French notion of a contemporary dance-theatre, one which tries to synthesize ballet vocabulary and modern dance's dramatic purposes. Among that mode's trademarks are extreme shapes done sleekly, distorted but recognizably balletic combinations with bits of pop dance (tap, disco) and large ordinary movements (rolling, falling) thrown in, and sensational material presented with a glossy veneer in a super-serious mood (this genre's *ne plus ultra*: Bejart). So the evening-length work essayed a most hilarious and brutal subject, Weimar Germany, in a glazed manner that was all Taste and Style—in a word, mannerism, an approach which generated no kinetic or dramatic power.

One psychological mood—alienation—was expressed throughout in the work's schematic structure: thirteen "modules" of phrases for different groupings of its five dancers. That statement was repeated by its emblematic gestures; two favorites were a pointed finger followed by a kind of shivering attack and a fall to the floor, and a slo-mo blown kiss to the audience. When not "on," its chicly-coiffed, pretty performers sat at a table set with wine and roses in the rear of the space, and constantly changed into red, white, and green t-shirts over their tailored gray pants (early on, there were tasteful bare breasts).



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