

The Kitchen Center for Video and Music

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Dance: Sylvia Whitman's Humor

Tasks, such as hauling, tugging and the like, are austere sources of choreographic inspiration ordinarily, but Sylvia Whitman finds an odd humor in everyday chores. Her concert Friday evening at the Kitchen was a series of set pieces entitled "Clear View" that combined both advanced means and warm humanity, a rare combination.

Her performers made up two groups, a dozen members of the Andrade family, six adults and six children in ordinary dress, and her dancers in more usual costume. Each group was allotted suitable assignments.

The Andrade family had to undergo that social must, posing for a group picture, which it did with equanimity as a photographer flashed away. Later one of the young children marched around in a living-room setting practicing for a school ceremony.

At another point she gave herself the job of ironing a large circular cloth with a hole in the center. After carefully spreading it out she whipped it from the floor with great panache and slipped it over her head, to walk proudly off with it cinched about her waist as a multicolored skirt.

Her preoccupation with the ordinary was carried to Pop Arts lengths in a

brief section called "Cigar." Jeff Aron, Lynne Morrison, Carol Parkinson and Miss Whitman emerged holding a 10-foot roll of paper like a battering ram. They proceeded to "snuff" it by charging headlong into a wall until there was nothing left but a collapsed stub. It was unexpected, fast and witty.

The most elaborate of the sections was the beautiful and whimsical "Fans." The four faced off in pairs and touched foreheads, sat and turned in unison and then unfolded Art Deco-sized fans from the floor and hid behind them. Periodically they peered out or moved paper arrows along the circumference.

It was like a child's game and concluded with a cluster of four paper horses galloping up and down the rises of the fans, which had been draped with a white cloth. It was pure fantasy, delightfully accompanied by Terry Riley's "Poppy No Good."

The final task was stretching a green tape from one column and securing it to the floor. Miss Whitman then braced it with a green pole along the length of another column, with the pole forming a diagonal to its right angle. It was as pretty as a picture and deft, as all of the vignettes were.

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