## **Self's Seductive** Skill

## By GARY PARKS

If you start to become seduced by the intense visual glamour of Jim Self's dances, shake yourself so that their sturdy kinetic virtues don't get obscured. In his appearance at The Ritchen May 26-29, Self showed three works, all visually compelling, If one of them - a duet excerpted from the forthcoming Beehive -- is merely decorative, the other two, Perpetrator and Heaven and Earth, would be striking even if stripped hare.

Perpretator shows off Self as choreographer and dancer, and he's working at a high level in both roles Commissioned last year by the American Dance Festival, Perpetrator indicates Self's background

with Merce Cunningham (in where company he danced for three years) in its large. scale technical requirements. When he or Lisa Fox, another Cunningham alumna, leap into the air, their strong legs (an out like a hawk's spreading wings.

Self calls for many such leaps and great ground-covering strides from Fox, Jon Mensinger, Teri Weksler, and himself throughout Perpetrator, Small details of gesture and time embellish the grander steps. Mensinger and Weksler stand at one point with torsos so tensed you can see the biceps stand out on their arms. This doesn't happen instanteously; it takes a few moments for the tension to build. At another point. Self repeatedly looks toward Fox, not so much to see her as to let us see the whites of his cychalls as he

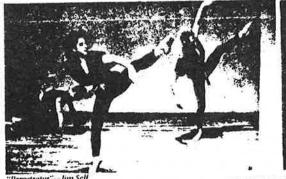
rorates them. Later, Self flicks his tongue, recalling a serpent.

This is not the usual kind of detail one sees in western art dance, where action of the whole body or of specific limbs is more often the norm. Certain Asian dances do emphasize such gestures, and a slightly Oriental cast in Perpetrator is strengthened by Naomi Lane's beautiful red and black reversible vests, whose broad shoulders hint at Japanese robes. Frankie Mann's taped score combines the sounds of trains, a rainstorm, newscasts, and snatches of music, all of which surround the dance with an aura of different times and places

Despite the potentially disorienting mix of all these elements, Perpetrator is never vague. It unrolls inexorably, like a computer printont. Heightened street make aperases the performers' individual imperfections, transforming them (Men singe in particular) into gorgeously purposeful dancing machines. The dancers neochet about long knite sharp pathways until some higher order calls them to a Pas de Deux" would benefit by cutting:

The solemn Heaven and Earth is a group of sketches from Robert Wilson's opera in-progress called The Civil Wars The excepts are accompanied by A Leroy's taped score, which doesn't seem weighty enough to support, or even coexist with, this grave dance. The work is set for Perpetrator's four dancers, costurned (by Christophe de Mend) to suggest Plains Indians of the American Southwest, plus Rob Besserer, who fune tions as a sort of tribal deity.

Besserer is a grant of a man [kneeling, he's nearly as tall as Weksler when she standshas well as an accomplished dancer He is dressed in a heavy red loneloth, with black triangles painted on his face and a thick collar of black feathers bround his neck. He also wears a headdress with ears. The other men are similarly intired. though barechested, possibly to indicate some sort of subservience to Bessier's central figure, fox and Weksler have heavy white dresses and ribboard head pieces, and Fox, at least, seeins to have sowdered her body white



After the tough, unyielding beauty of Perpetrator, you're apt to forgive Self anything- even the unlikely "Flower Pas De Deux" from Berlive: There's a kernel of a funny idea here all about what might happen if a young bee met a flower that didn't just stand there yet even Frank Moore's witty costumes can't cover up the pancity of movement material Hope Gillerman, as the peripatetic fuchsta, begins in a shoulder stand, her legs thrust into the air like ripe pistils. By dance's end. Weksler's worker bee dives into Gilleman's lush petals, but in between nothing much happens. Since the conclusion is lorgone, it's the getting from A to Z that must intrigue "Hower

Luckily Self's powerful cheseography can support this vivid production. Weks ler, for instance, in a beautifully realized performance, stretches into many highheld arabesques, and the accumulated to sonance is awesome. Self-makes signific ant use of different combinations of dancers, so that one may elect to see a whole society in the permutations of the dance. When, toward the conclusion, Besserer processes down a ceremonial alley formed by the other dances, and bends forward to slap the floor, the simple act is made momentous. The enignatic convergence of god and man concludes with an inexpected onslaught of darkness, as Moore's bright heliting suddenly decays