

VILLAGE VOICE

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DANCE

By Their Laws We Know Them

By Deborah Jowitz

KEI TAKEI/MOVING EARTH. At Dance Umbrella at Camera Mart/Stage One (October 9 to 14). *Light, Part 4* and New-York premiere of *Light, Part 14 (Pine Cone Field)*.

JENNIFER MULLER AND DANCERS. At City Center (October 9-16-14). Premieres of *Conversations* and *Mondriaan*.

MARY OVERLIE. The Kitchen (October 10 to 14). Premiere of *Hero*.

above.

Downtown at the Kitchen, the people in Mary Overlie's quiet, immensely engrossing *Hero* seem in some way like features of a landscape. They run in a crowd, sit immobile, watch and wait dispassionately. They do very few things, but they do these in arresting rhythms and with an air of great expectancy.

A small crowd appears recessed in the Kitchen's back room. And retreats. A few pairs of dancers, in turn, enter through a door and walk sideways on a diagonal, leaning sideways; when they butt up against the wall they slide to the floor, wait, get up and leave. This seems like a prologue to what follows. Twelve dancers in gold, orange, or green jumpsuits perform simple, clear moves or poses that frame three soloists, Wendell Beavers, Nina Martin, and Joanne Tilleman, who wear lavender and soft blues. While the large group splits into two, runs, stops, sits, or slowly changes position, the trio goes through a long chain of holds and lifts and balances; they assume each pose quietly and expertly, then hold it a second as if to let it be recorded in memory. The other group, as I remember, doesn't see the trio, yet, once, in a sudden move, every other person in the larger group swoops up another and holds him/her rigid and horizontal—a pose that recalls something the trio has done.

Later, when the large group masses to fill the area, the trio moves into their ranks, doing what the group does and also doing what the trio has always done, working patiently through the obstacle course of others. The group lies down and rolls toward and away from us, rolls for what seems an eternity. Then the large group arranges itself in one corner and begins a series of slow gestures: chin on hand, arm wrapping body, hand over ear—and some more peculiar. The dancers do this with a numb, patient look—the kind of look people get when they're trying very hard, but without anxiety, to remember something. The three, whom I now begin in my mind to call "leaders," watch. They get up and start their sequence again, but it doesn't work; they can't assume the poses with the skill and accuracy they once had. They have to wait/look/feel for each other. Most of the more strenuous actions, they barely indicate. They look more human somehow and very dispirited. Gradually the trio gathers strength and precision again, and toward the end members of the other group again echo that quick, forceful lift.

Although Overlie's dance is extremely formal and could be said to be about pattern, repetition or rhythm as much as anything, I found it very moving. Images kept stirring in my head of the icons of a tribe, and their human derivations, of the heroes that move only half-recognized through the world.