

Dance: Simons Troupe

ALTHOUGH it was sometimes strange, Ton Simons's choreography was always clear at last Thursday night's performance by Ton Simons and Dancers at the Kitchen. The young Dutch choreographer's love of sharp imagery resulted in works so strongly pictorial that they could easily be described in terms borrowed from painting or design.

Moving at great speed and betraying no signs of emotion other than a delight in briskness itself, the nine dancers of "Spread" scattered themselves about, turning the stage into a gigantic Abstract Expressionist "action painting" come alive. The all-white costumes by Mark Lancaster made the dance a monochromatic abstraction, and Andrew Lord's echoing score based on street cries of Mexican children suggested that a vast sonic space was being filled at the same time that the dancers were filling their visual space.

Even more energetic was "Tally," a set of interlocking solos and duets for Mr. Simons and Ellen van Schuylenburch performed on and around a table and chair and with the dancers

holding and passing an empty tin can. These objects were essentially only shapes in a design. Yet viewers fond of allegory might nevertheless have interpreted them and Mr. Lancaster's tape collage of traffic sounds as symbols of modern industrialism. Certainly, the keyed-up but unadorned choreography could be called an example of high-tech dance.

Whereas "Tally" and "Spread" were crammed with steps, "The Knife Sharpener" was almost static. Billed as a "tableau" by William Katz and Mr. Simons, and with a scenario by Bruce Chatwin, it began with Mr. Simons, almost nude, and Rick Merrill, in formal attire, posed beside an overturned bicycle.

To organ music by Gerald Busby that sounded like calliope tunes, Mr. Merrill sharpened a blade on one of the bicycle's wheels, and Mr. Simons drew back a curtain to reveal a shadowy room of bird cages. Because the images were simultaneously strange and precise, the tableau resembled a Surrealist collage. Once again, Mr. Simons managed to combine strangeness with clarity.

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