

VILLAGE VOICE

the village

DANCE

» The New York dance season used to rev up in October. This year it started right after Labor Day. What with series like Dancenow Downtown, Evening Stars Onstage, and Y Dance, a tireless viewer could catch at least 35 works in a single week.

It's great to have dance at the 14th Street Y again, even though the big gym, where Oceola Bragg presented programs for a dozen years, is no longer available. Beverly Blossom, doyenne of robust eccentricity, and Matthew Mohr, ex-Cunningham dancer in his first New York appearance as a choreographer, exemplify the range of the recent series. Blossom, grandly gowned and extravagantly hatted for her *Sorry, Miss*, holds forth from a chair centered on the Y's small proscenium stage. To Sibelius's "Valse Triste," she makes important gestures, then abandons them in distaste or appears to drop off for a catnap. When she speaks of her nervy first audition in the New York she'd come to conquer years ago, her "NO PREVIOUS TRAINING!" becomes a rhythmic element in her superb performance. Mohr avoids center stage and characterization. He falls in from the wings, turns his head to regard us, and rolls off. His absences become as important as his lean, grave presence, and the empty space of this *Landscape for One* is held down by Tobias Ralph's drumming (my son—his presence took me by surprise). Mohr injects and ejects himself in skillfully timed, gradually escalating appearances—crawling lizardlike, squirming, ploughing across, briefly erect and dancing.

Amy O'Brien (ex-Tharp dancer) and Matthew Hope perform O'Brien's *Bottleneck Blues* to honky-tonk music. It's a clever piece with fine rhythmic variety. Given O'Brien's cropped hair and pants, the two look like two feisty boys—linear and almost doll-like in their precision. In *Cadenza*, Graham Lustig (ex-Sadlers Wells Royal Ballet et al.) also plays with the idea of a matched pair; Jennifer Cavanaugh and Bat Abbit dance wearing 18th-century jackets. The opening harpsichord sounds in Henryk Gorecki's music give extra bite to their initial ingenious and bold side-by-side dancing. A middle section with lifts is more ordinary.

In Mark Dendy's *Frieze*, Felicia Norton molds herself into poses, balancing tension with sensuously smooth control—a bacchante glimpsed in slow motion. Amos Pinhasi wears a black gown and pulls rose petals from its every fold in his *Two Sentimental Songs*. While Dalida's voice sings goodbyes to love, Pinhasi scatters petals, swooping lugubriously, but also snarls and shreds one unlucky rose into oblivion.

The amount of stylistic variation was unusual and heartening. You couldn't pin any labels on this program, except, maybe, excellent. ▮