

portant and rewarding of these is teaching for which there are many opportunities all over the country. But I have had very little success in persuading young dancers to leave New York and go out into the middle of Nebraska, for example. They say, "Oh, me go to Nebraska? I want to stay here, something might happen in New York!" But there are good positions out there and it is not nearly such a desert as you might think. The rest of this country has a lot of intelligent people in it, and one of the great advantages is that you are going to be one who knows the most wherever you go. There all the opportunities, whatever they were, would gravitate toward you, in the studio, the theatre, or in the university. You can't all dance here, it's impossible. Somebody has to go away.

On Isolation and Egocentricity

When I was young my personal experience tended to isolate me and the people I was with a good bit from other dancers because, as I said, we went on very long tours — one-night stands all over the country. When you are travelling like this, you don't see anybody else, you hardly hear about any other dance that is going on. Therefore, under such circumstances, it is very difficult to even keep track of what others are doing, let alone be concerned with it. That was then, with no magazines in existence, but there isn't so much reason now, even when you travel a great deal.

Now all are very well conversant with what goes on in the field, and there should be a greater sympathy and a greater interest and action than there is. We must not tend to discount any kind of modern dance in which we are not personally concerned—"Mine is the only kind!". This viewpoint is very narrow and destructive. We had better have more concern for the whole field, or we won't have any.

Do not listen to isolationist kinds of talk or rejecting or ignoring other dancers or movements; resist such influence for the good of the whole. Do not forget: You are the ones who are going to be responsible for carrying the work on.

REVIEWS OF THE MONTH

Alwin Nikolais' "Totem"

Henry Street Playhouse

February 1-18, 1962

ALWIN NIKOLAIS does not offer us dancing *per se* as we have come to understand it in terms of any expression through movement. His concept is one of a dancing totality. He does not conquer weight or gravity through the conventional means of ease and grace of the body. He achieves the same results in creating a visual sensation that articulates a strange dream world.

We cannot very well speak of choreographic notions — although the end products have in their imaginative, raging freedom a clearly designed pattern—, but rather of pieces of fantasy whose rationality lies beyond human life and its problems.

His creations are closer to ballet in their stylization, or even to puppetry, than to the modern dance whose emotional essence he denies by erasing the dancer's personality. Out of necessity the modern dancer has made a cult of personality in his search for the artistic fulfillment of something very personal. Nikolais consciously excludes the potential drama of man. He only permits the theatre to function on a magic level of his own determination where the conflict lies in matter, not in man, the place of action in a land where man has so far advanced that the inanimate beings have freed themselves from their servitude of the animate beings. His is a fairy tale atmosphere which has the technological stamp of tomorrow.

He forces upon us a kinetic rapport through the sheer playfulness of his moving objects. The baffling staccato impressions of his light tricks as well as the uncommunicative, but compelling, sound effects help along. Instead of a narrative he offers an experience solely resting on the sensuous physicality of the body moving in harmony with his subjectivized objects, props or

costumes.

Nikolais found his own answer to the non-literal trend in the artistic expression of our time. He conjures up all elements of the theatre and then, swinging his choreographic wand with half-closed eyes, but with all windows of his subliminal mind open, lets things happen. Sounds calling for color and light unite in their embrace of objects and bodies which, following the power of their own momentum, begin to move. Without any compelling logic they create non-identifiable images which, however, are self-revealing in their transcendental meaninglessness.

If Nikolais is at his best, the painted movement sensations on the stage are a triumphant flight from reality into the realm of a theatrical wholeness; if at his worst the magician out-tricks the artist in him and lets the audience in on the secret that imagination and creativity are often unreliable bed-fellows whose magic lies in a combination of a few intangibles.

In the revised version of his work *Totem* he comes, more often than not,

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