



ADG's Dance Cluster

By Catherine Mapp

Catherine Mapp is Director of Dance at Iona College. She is also a choreographer and dancer.

Six choreographers presented an amalgam of danceworks at the Cunningham Studio in NYC on February 11–13th as part of the Dance Cluster Series. The series, presented by the American Dance Guild, was begun in 1990 by Anita Willoughby and Janet Gerson, to provide a forum for presenting work in a non-curated environment with a cooperative structure for program and production responsibilities. It is a decidedly bias-free venue with a penchant for uneven programs. Such was the case on Saturday night, the twelfth.

For this viewer, the more potent dance vistas were unrolled by Lynn Wichern and Leslie Yancey. *Shoes*, a work in progress by Ms. Wichern, was the most complete piece. Affirming her creative coupling with composer David Wolfson, *Shoes* featured emboldened and deconstructed rhythms (performed live by Mr. Wolfson on solo piano) driving minimalist movements that sorted and reconfigured three pairs of shoes to a variety of body and floor parts.

The supporting dance parts were deliciously informed by Karen Deaver, Leigh Hansen and Bernadette Knaeble; three post-adolescents with gentle demeanors riding an undertow of determined self-centeredness. Ms. Wichern's wit and body/shoe part articulation do not let up. Terse is the order of this stage moment that swings into a remarkably altered state of dance.

Wavelike images fold into and out of Ms. Yancey's *Les Calaveras*. Only occasionally do the four dancers break away from their sweeping pulses of movement. The journey is nomadic and focused at once, dilated and tribal with instances of individualism. There is a clear beauty to this dance with cohesive performances by Janet Aisawa, Valerie Aderemi, Adefokun, Claudia Meyer and Sue Perschino. Extended arms ebb around the space and flow into resting mounds of stillness, the somnolence echoed in the canvas draping that covers the dancers in the final fade. The lighting design by Susannah Hewson effectively framed the piece.



There were elements of rapture in Aria Edry's *Continent of Origin*, in particular the evocative text whose author and narrator are not credited in the program notes. Jody Kaplan and Richard Siegal spent a lot of energy working out their relationship in *Margaret Wandering*, while Jamie Stiller's *Show Her White, She Sees Black* culminated in a live cabbage between some sumptuous dancing by Kyra Anderson and Heather Connolly. The evening's finale, *Gravel, Forty* by David Capps, seemed incomplete and unclear.

The Dance Cluster Series is an important option for practicing dancemakers to focus their energy on launching their ideas. Such opportunities can hone talents, and provide a petri dish for creative development.