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WEEKEND REVIEWS

Dance

UCLA Company in Showcase at Royce Hall

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Choreography is easy, programming is hard.

That's how it seems sometimes, when worthy short works clash or cancel one another out on a badly assembled mixed bill. However, in its annual showcase Friday in Royce Hall, the UCLA Dance Company proved that an evening of one-act pieces can achieve the unity of a full-length creation if the components are chosen so that they speak to and enrich one another.

In this lesson in enlightened juxtaposition, four pieces choreographed in the last five years fit perfectly, with the connections ranging from content to common stylistic approaches and even a

shared movement motif or two.

China dominated the beginning and end of the program, with Angelia Leung layering anecdotes about her mother in the text accompanying her whimsical "Tales of a Shuo-Shu-Che" and Pat Catterson abstracting contemporary history in her nightmarish "Tiananmen."

Leung's choreography aimed for a childlike sweetness as it depicted emotional states that proved far more sharply defined in the narration: pleasure, ugliness, boredom, worry, confusion/creativity and stillness.

For ugliness, Leung asked her six dancers to make faces and execute a few contortions and silent screams, or sidle drunkenly back and forth—this on a stage that has held Paul Taylor's "Dust"

and "Last Look."

Her physicalization of the other qualities proved just as perfunctory—defensible theoretically as a child's perceptions, but inescapably feeble as movement expression for an adult audience.

Set to music by Philip Glass, "Tiananmen" featured waves of people surging forward and then retreating: beaten back by an overwhelming, unseen force. Catterson used only 11 dancers, but her brilliant deployment of them in overlapping small, bold vignettes created the illusion of dozens more.

By using Glass' music and incorporating fugal structures in her large-scale passages, Catterson created a sense of formal group purpose shattered into individual pain. Mime represented anarchy, dancing embodied the will of the

people—and certain sequences appeared to be documentary clips heightened through repetition into an engulfing statement.

The trio from Kei Takei's "Light, Part 23 (Pilgrimage)" also featured dancers advancing and being hurled back, along with pinioned arms and the weight of repetition. Here, however, the choreographer made the characters' ordeal appear inescapable—a condition of existence—rather than the unexpected calamity portrayed by Catterson.

Suzee Goldman's "Reigns" focused on enslavement of another sort, as three masked figures in male attire manipulated a woman by pulling on long elastic straps attached to her corset.

Most of the work's energy came from Butch Rován's score, and nearly all of its visual distinction from Alwin Nikolais' "Tensile Involvement," but this crude, neo-Expressionist charade benefited from context: other, better works Friday that showed women defying the odds.