
In Performance

DANCE

How Mother and Father Would Dance Together

Pat Catterson
Bessie Schönberg Theater

Pat Catterson's parents were professional ballroom dancers in the 1940's and 50's. For Ms. Catterson, they must have been magical figures. She lovingly evoked the allure of their dancing in "The Ballroom," a new work she presented on Sunday afternoon as part of "Choreography by Pat Catterson."

Ms. Catterson combined modern dance with ballroom and tap-dancing to create an almost surrealistic dream world in which, thanks to adjustable panels at the sides of the stage, women's partners were sometimes nothing but elegantly beckoning arms or suavely tapping feet. And she suggested the universal appeal of ballroom dancing when, to a dance-instruction record narrated by her father, students, both old and young, tried to master the mambo.

All were soon happily lost in fantasy.

Ms. Catterson proved adept at choreographing for groups in two other pieces. Her new "Dust" alternated dazed and hopeless-looking movements in silence with dances to recorded music by Bach in which 10 dancers were possessed by strong passions while Ben Dolphin moved among them like a figure of fate. Although she kept juxtaposing such scenes long after she had made her basic point, each sequence was an interesting variation on her theme.

A false climax marred "Tian an Men (Peaceful Gate)." Fortunately, most of this work to music by Philip Glass was emotionally stirring. The way in which people kept rushing headlong in wave after wave of movement suggested that thousands of people were present. In reality, there were only 10. But their fervor transformed them all into characters from an epic.

JACK ANDERSON