Marquette University
e-Publications@Marquette

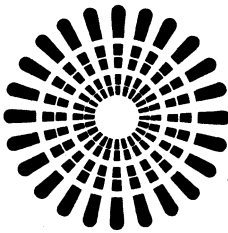
Philosophy Faculty Research and Publications | Philosophy, Department of

7-1-1979

Dance Circus Moving Toward Success

Curtis Carter
Marquette University, curtis.carter@marquette.edu

Originally published by the Wisconsin Dance Council in *Dance Dimensions* Volume 7, No. 3-4 (Summer-Fall 1979).



DANCE CIRCUS MOVING TOWARD SUCCESS

Is Dance Circus in danger of becoming a Milwaukee establishment? Or, What is the state of modern dance in Milwaukee? Dance Circus performed its fall concert in Vogel Hall of the Milwaukee Performing Arts Center, September 13, with more than half of the approximately 450 seats occupied. The company began its career in far less auspicious quarters a few years ago. Sheer determination and aggressive management has enabled the company to survive. With the aid of a variety of funds from the National Endowment for the Arts, Wisconsin Arts Board, Milwaukee Arts Development Council, and other revenue from teaching and touring. The remarkable fact is that finally one modern dance company in town has found a way to exist on a continuing basis.

How has Dance Circus

succeeded artistically? It continues to broaden the performance repertory to include regional and national choreographers. This particular concert featured Amanda Lynn's "Snap Back" and Reynaldo Alejandro's "Gabriella Silang," and three works of Betty Salamun's choreography, including a premiere of "A Sand Country Almanac," "Winter Dawn," and "Tako." The eight-part "Almanac" borrows its themes from Aldo Leopold's book of the same name. Narration and movement combine to suggest nature images. The dance contains some unusual shapes, particularly in a duet with Salamun and one of the other female dancers, but it is marred by its excessive length and by a tinge of sentimentality. Perhaps a shorter version would retain the freshness that the longer form could not sustain.

Overall, the look of the company is improving. The women dancers are better than in past seasons; Andrea Tecza, for example, performed with sensitivity in "Gabriella Silang," a solo which depicted a Philippine woman's revolutionary spirit. There is, nevertheless, a substantial need for improving the quality of the dancers.

The problem is, in part, one of finding dancers given the restricted amount of funding available to such troups. Another problem is the apparent shortage of good dancers in Milwaukee. Understandably, the best dancers will want to go elsewhere to improve their skills and to seek other performing opportunities. But the growing dance audience in Milwaukee offers new opportunities for at least some of the best to band together. Groups such as Dance Circus are forming the nucleus for further developments. One hopes that they will soon be able to attract the necessary artistic resources and the funding for their support.

By Curtis L. Carter