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DANCE REVIEW

A Collection of the Sassy New and the Solid Familiar

By JENNIFER DUNNING

The ambitious Dance Now '97 festival began on Wednesday night with a marathon program at the Joyce SoHo that lived up to most of the festival's four aims. If there wasn't anything particularly unconventional, one of the aims, about the pieces, the evening was intimate, theatrical and in parts even dynamic.

More important, the program offered the mix of new and familiar and the variety of dance styles that characterize the entire two-week festival, which includes 45 performances, classes and panel discussions at 24 theaters, galleries, dance studios and lofts, recreation and sports centers in lower Manhattan.

The new was represented on Wednesday night by Brian Brooks, the festival's appointed mascot, who will appear at each event. "In a Candy Coated Shell," performed by three likable young dancers (Mr. Brooks, Brandi Norton, Maile Okamura), was a bright, slight opening piece set to a score of amusingly dated advertising jingles that



Tom Brazil

Dancers performing Nicholas Leichter's "Tightrope" at the Joyce SoHo.

seemed to have little to do with the choreography.

Four sassy dancers (Eric Handman, Lucia Horn, Krista Miller and Amy Larimer) shifted from polite

motion to whirling, leaping, staggering, full-blast dancing and finally to well-earned repose in Nicholas Leichter's "Tightrope," danced to music by Shirley Walker. David Neu-

mann, a solo performer with impressive dance and acting skills, was a restless urban street hustler in an excerpt from "Dose," a tour de force, set to music by Tom Waits, for a slithery, oozy torso and deftly scattershot feet and hands.

Linda Tarnay represented the resonantly familiar in her "Half Past Kissing Time: A Dance for Jack," a solo set to Puccini that incorporated dancing created and enjoyed by Jack Moore, whom the dance commemorated. It is a great pleasure to see the kind of old-time weight and formality Ms. Tarnay brings back to movement. The program closed with Janis Brenner's "Matter of Time," set to music by David Karagianis, a dark, discursive piece for four dancers (Sherri Hellman, Naomi Josepher, John-Mario Sevilla and Laurie Shayler) in which a man and a woman sought comforting closeness and finally won it.

The evening also included dance by Zvi Gotheiner, Sally Hess, Michele Ellman, Sara Hook, Colin Connor, Jean Vitrano, Kristin Eliasberg, Heidi Latsky, Lawrence Goldhuber and David Parker.