

□ In mid-April, St. Mark's Church, destroyed by fire in 1973, reopened its main sanctuary for religious services and performing arts events. The Danspace Project (headed by Cynthia Hedstrom) in collaboration with the Bennington College Judson Project (curated by Daniel Cameron and Wendy Perron) brought together reconstructions of sixteen works originally performed by the Judson Dance Theater. Developing out of Robert Dunn's composition class, this group of dancers, musicians and poets presented their works at the Judson Memorial Church during the early '60s.

Dancers today often think of minimalism as the JDT's major contribution to dance, yet these reconstructions are flamboyant, gleefully iconoclastic and contribute to modern dance's current theatrical conventions as surely as do such earlier choreographers as Graham and Limón, more well-known for their dramatic styles. For example, Elizabeth Streb's work with platforms is reminiscent of Simone Forti's *Slant Board* (1961), even if the choreographers' intentions and the specifics of execution are quite different. Remy Charlip's evocative gesturing in *Meditation* (1966) has a following in the recent interest, among choreographers, in American sign language, and Lucinda Child's *Caravation* (1964) is a social critique essentially similar to this year's performances by Tim Miller, John Bernd and Johanna Boyce.

If JDT didn't proffer minimalism the way we assume, it certainly made broad, even revolutionary, changes in dance and theater. Yet without the impact of novelty, some of these dances lose a good deal of their interest, and it's curious to see which pieces have more to them than their iconoclasm, which are compelling twenty years later. With full recognition that

what's "compelling today" is an artifact of modern dance's current issues and might not be so in twenty more years, I offer my list (in no particular order): *Jag Ville Gioma Telefonera* (Steve Paxton, 1964), *Trio A* (Yvonne Rainer, 1966), *Meditation* and *Caravation*.

What these works have that most of the others don't is a balance between intensity and duration. In *Caravation*, for example, Childs can put a wire kitchen basket over her head and stuff loaner rubber hair rollers between its prongs for quite a while because the visual image is striking and because of the numerical precision and willful absurdity of her motions. Though there are no props or theatrical conceits in *Trio A*, the movement itself is peculiar enough to hold one's attention, and the absolutely even rhythm of Rainer's performance becomes a whole other area of fascination.

On the other hand, works like *Slant Board*, *Lateral Splay* (Carolee Schneemann, 1963) and *Tin* (Deborah Hay, 1968), with their improvisational exploration of fairly simple projects (like climbing a slant board or running to the center or to the edges of a room) can't be viewed with the same single-minded concentration. They evolve slowly, diffusely, with many events occurring simultaneously, and part of the point is that the viewer may focus his attention where he chooses or simply let his mind wander. This often works well if the

audience is allowed to move around the way one does in a gallery. Both *Tin* and *Slant Board*, performed during intermission, gave this flexibility. *Lateral Splay* and *Dancer for Lots of People*, however, went on too long for their seated performance.

The purpose of JDT was largely revolutionary, to go outside and beyond earlier dance tradition. The purpose of reconstructions is largely historical, to cut through the myths about JDT and to look again at the actual work. What historical review often reveals about revolutions is that to be a front runner of change is not enough. What happens when everyone else catches up? MARCIA PALLY