

Time and Again

By Deborah Jowitz

Dance by Neil Greenberg

At La Mama

April 29 through May 2

"It's Neil's 'Golden Section,'" says someone, but, really, except for the gleaming pants and shirts, there's not much similarity between Neil Greenberg's *A Truth Dance* and the last section of Twyla Tharp's *The Catherine Wheel*. Greenberg's piece is predominantly gentle and thoughtful, despite the generous scale of most of the dancing, and no one touches anyone else. Bursts of Chris Cochrane's music are punctuated by periods of silence. Michael Stiller's lighting is quite dark.

Greenberg makes fine movement and works it with craft. He begins by adding performers, one by one, until four are dancing in a square, their different, quiet phrases drawn toward and away from a center. The stage is alive with comings and goings; a solo figure may be etched against a moving background. Almost every one of the interesting performers (C. Batenhorst, Nathaniel Lee, Justine Lynch, Jo McKendry, Julianne Pollitt, and Greenberg) is

foregrounded at one time or another. The steps look good on all of them—complementing, say, both Batenhorst's incisive style and deliberate muscularity and McKendry's beautifully released, grounded dancing. The stage picture is constantly re-forming, the phrases varying within themselves and in juxtaposition to others—as if a purposeful dreamer were twisting a kaleidoscope to make the pieces appear, vanish, reappear in new configurations.

What I don't know is why the piece is called *A Truth Dance*. It seems no more "true" to me than *I Am A Miserable And Selfish Person (Kick Me Dance)* (1992), which according to a press release gave "narrative to the faulty core beliefs that can live in a person's mind." The same six dancers have KICK ME appliquéd on the seats of their jeans; three doors labeled GUILTY, SAD, and HAPPY get wheeled into various positions (the HAPPY door is the smallest, and no one goes through it until

the end, when Greenberg takes the plunge).

Greenberg spends quite a lot of time lying on the floor, looking uncomfortable, as if he were the dreamer conjuring up these dancing visions. Zeena Parkins's music is intermittent; imagine someone suddenly opening a door on a brash world, then shutting it again. If I try hard, I can see dissonance or imbalance or anger in the movement; I can see competitiveness in the way dancers face off on a square of carpet or rush to try the tilting phrase with its climactic cartwheel that McKendry introduces. Perhaps if I saw the two dances a few more times, I'd pick up on differences between them. Right now, I can admire the variegated shapes and dynamics of Greenberg's choreography, the liveliness of the stage picture, but his agendas elude me. There's something he wants his dances to tell me, and I can't quite catch what they're saying.