

## DANCE



Susan Salinger

Neil Greenberg and his company perform a new evening-length work at Dance Theater Workshop, 219 West 19th Street, beginning Wednesday

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Reviews/**Dance***Briefly, It Might as Well Be Spring*

By JENNIFER DUNNING

Neil Greenberg's new evening-long "Branches, Swords, Flowers, Spears," performed on Thursday night at Dance Theater Workshop's Bessie Schönberg Theater, certainly lived up to its name. There were branches, some of them bronzed. Swords were waved. Flowers were thrust, often looking like extensions of the dancers' hands. Spears were hefted. And everything was thrown to the

ground repeatedly, sometimes in the wings, with an amusing amount of clatter, and sometimes center stage.

It wasn't clear what any of this, however diverting, had to do with the rest of what was going on on stage. The first half of "Branches, Swords, Flowers, Spears" consisted of brief episodes, danced by a quartet of principals and three others, that took place in front of and behind a greenish curtain that hung across the stage.

Abruptly presented, the episodes

looked at times like sequences from a class in Merce Cunningham technique. They also suggested that Mr. Greenberg, a former Cunningham dancer, has been profoundly affected by Mr. Cunningham's use of discontinuity. But this seemed to be discontinuity for its own sake, and one longed to see Mr. Greenberg keep his dancers on stage for longer than a few moments, in passages of continuous dancing.

The second half of the piece was much more satisfying. There was less play with the curtain and props and more sustained dancing — with a weighted quality that was distinctly different from the Cunningham style. Mr. Greenberg also played fascinatingly with protean, changing floor shapes toward the end, in a dance for the principals that looked like an exploration of the mutability of the square.

Both elements suggested that Mr. Greenberg is moving in directions that are new for him. The high quality of his performers was also heartening. "Branches" was performed, without a score, by Mr. Greenberg, Christopher Batenhorst, Matthew Carmody, Maya Ciarrochi, Sondra Loring, Elizabeth Maxwell and Jean McDade. Rhonda Rubinson designed the greenish lighting, which suggested, along with a brief appearance by a Maypole, that "Branches" might have had something to do with spring.