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DANCE REVIEW | AMERICAN DANCE GUILD PERFORMANCE FESTIVAL

The Fine Art of Making the Most of What You Have

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In 1956 12 dance instructors formed the Dance Teachers Guild with the intention of promoting education and audience awareness. That organization grew into the American Dance Guild, which



Peter Kyle in Murray Louis's "Frail Demons." - Hiroyuki Ito for The New York Times

“A small 50-k diamond is just as nice as a big 50-k diamond,” he noted jovially.

Two of Mr. Louis's dances were shown. In an excerpt from “Figura,” created in 1978, Betsy Fisher tickles the space with movement textured with a Spanish motif. As her arms form a diamond above her head, her knees soften in a plié and she flicks her hips from side to side in winsome playfulness.

currently serves the field with conferences, publications and events, including the annual American Dance Guild Performance Festival.

This season the festival, held at Dance New Amsterdam, presents more than 40 companies and choreographers in a sort of intergenerational free-for-all. It also includes tributes to two distinguished figures in modern dance: Anna Sokolow and Murray Louis, who was present on Thursday night.

With a white mustache and a cane — and his erect posture still intact — Mr. Louis, in his 80s, spoke briefly to the sold-out crowd about making the most of minimal means, comparing the intimate black-box theater at Dance New Amsterdam to that of the Henry Street Settlement, where he performed in the works of Alwin Nikolais in the 1950s.

Later, in Mr. Louis's "Frail Demons," Peter Kyle embodies subtly different characters. Inching his way across the stage in tiny steps, Mr. Kyle extends his arms in front of his body, as if pushing an invisible wall with his palms. In this study of isolation and control, in four short sections, Mr. Kyle shows different temperaments with the control and distance of a body propelled by a motor.

Other dances on the program — there were nine in all — were less compelling, frequently resembling



composition exercises. In her "Traces, Marks" Gloria McLean draws an outline of her body on white paper as a quartet of dancers swoop across the stage in disorderly unison. An excerpt from Yung-li Chen's "Pursuit of Balloons" was slight, but what resonated was the light, airy jump of Christopher Ralph, a dancer of promise who still has one year left at Purchase College.

Pooh Kaye performing in her 1983 dance "The River Sticks." - Hiroyuki Ito for The New York Times

Pooh Kaye's 1983 work "The River Sticks" made the most lasting impression of the evening. Balancing long sticks on her shoulders — others were arranged on the stage like teepees — Ms. Kaye found herself trapped in a set design by Catherine Kernan. In the end the sticks tumble like a game of Mouse Trap, but Ms. Kaye's funny and tender adventure, even after more than 20 years and far removed from its original setting, an abandoned greenhouse, does not. This "River Sticks" still flows.

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