

DANCE REVIEW

'Texas Tanz 2002' show highlights good dancing

By MOLLY GLENTZER
Houston Chronicle

Eight dances were presented at the Jewish Community Center's *Texas Tanz 2002* show Saturday. With one exception, it caught the choreographers in a reflective, abstract mood. There was an abundance of dimly lit dances tinged with sadness or quiet restlessness. The dancing was generally excellent throughout.

Weave Dance Company's *Chairman Dances*, by Janie Carothers and Maria Montes de Oca, was set to John Adams' music of the same name. It was an elegant piece for four dancers (the choreographers plus Bonnie Boykin Busker and Juliet Hicks). The choreography was orderly and formal, except for occasional bouts of jogging.

Chairman Dances built on several repeated motifs — perhaps too few — with sharp lines and angles. The movements were well-matched to the music's accents, focusing on arms that variously bent, shot out like arrows or flapped like stiff wings. The push-and-pull partnering added energy. The costumes, long split skirts of blue satin over black leotards, added sophistication.

Armando Duarte's *Duo*, to soulful flute and cello music by Joaquin Gutierrez Heras, was beautifully performed by the husband-wife team of Paola Georgudis and Fernando Moraga, a soloist with Houston Ballet. This very nice duet began with her cradled in his arms. But once she opened up her legs and landed on the floor, she struggled, trying to break out of a dependent mode.

When balletic lifts gave way to rolls and lunges on the floor, he always seemed to be swinging or leaping over her, suggesting that he was in control — although Moraga was more of a comforting figure than an overbearing one. At one point, Georgudis angrily but briefly shoved him away, his act of consolation was a nearly smothering embrace. She didn't find independence, although she was on top physically for a final, stunning image, with the two dancers "stacked" in a fetal position on the floor.

The angst continued to smolder in *Love Waiting I & II*, a solo for Susan Blair by Sandy Marcello. Set to Secret Garden's romantic *Adagio*, it had a nice mix of sweeping motions and tension, mostly in the arms. As the first section ended, Blair seemed to capture something between her hands. She let it go, then swooped around the stage, arms wide, as if blown back by the wind.

As in the *Weave* piece, Marcello's more lyrical steps were sometimes broken by jogging — a modern device that helps convey rawness and chaos. It also keeps things from looking too pretty, although I sometimes find it distracting when dancers run into place and wait for the next step. (This happened more with *Chairman Dances* than *Love Waiting*.)

Another husband-wife team, Shannon and Rob Davidson, did a trademark Mr. and Mrs. Atlas routine in *Walking on a Different Planet (Stranger in a Strange Land)*, to music by Houston composer Terrence Karn. Among the Davidsons' bag of impressive acrobatic feats: a spinning headstand for him — with no arms holding him up — as she twirled him by the feet, and a trick in which she hung upside down, over his back, holding him at the ankles, while he walked. At another point he stood on his head with his legs open in a split, and she nonchalantly climbed on top. I don't know what the intended message was, if there was one.

The Davidsons' *Grios*, which premiered last winter, was the evening's only upbeat dance. It incorporated the Davidsons plus Michael Banigan, Lindsey McGill and Kristina Perello in a fun take on Celtic themes. A second viewing didn't reveal anything deeper about *Grios*, but the dance remained entertaining.

In fact, audiences like most things the Davidsons do. They are intriguing to watch. He's puckish, with a stiff swagger that makes his strong, high leaps a surprise. He's funny in a gruff, low-key way. She's a good foil for his deadpan macho humor — perky and feminine, with beautifully arched feet and a soft edge that belies her incredible strength.

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Montes de Oca's *Remembrance and Farewell*, also seen earlier, offered the evening's most intense dancing. Montes de Oca and Georgudis were sensationally taut — gripping but not melodramatic — as women in a battle of wills who finally wore each other down. The dance made the most of three pieces by local composer Reynaldo Ochoa.

I was not impressed with *No More Blue Mondays* by Huntsville choreographer Sara Imhoff-Jones. It had bad music, for one thing — from the album *Apocalyptic Plays Metallica by Four Cellos*. The seven dancers worked hard but needed fine-tuning. Imhoff-Jones made a ceremony of donning aprons from a clothesline before the dancers crouched around the stage like washerwomen at a river. When they moved, mostly in clusters, I had no idea what was propelling them.

Duarte's *Andante Cantabile*, a solo danced by Alessandra Herszkowicz, was an excerpt from a work called *Noir*. It was overwrought musically and underdeveloped choreographically. Worse, the heavy Rachmaninoff score was set at an ear-splitting volume, and the lights — which were too dim to begin with — went down several bars before the dance was finished.