

the village VOICE

Dancing on Strings

by Deborah Jowitt
April 30 - May 6, 2003

In *Rein, Bellow*, Bill Young and his co-choreographer, Colleen Thomas, also deal with issues of confinement and control. Shown in early April at the Duke, this departure into dance theater doesn't violate the peaceful ambience that's so integral to Bill Young & Dancers' usual non-narrative pieces. The intrepid, loving, and lovable crew have simply entered a surreal world—a shared dream, perhaps—in which they're asked to perform strange tasks and do so without dread. Philip Hamilton's score adds its own matter-of-fact mystery to the mix: whispering, a folk dance, a men's choir. The long, diaphanous white curtains and swags conceived by lighting designer Rick Murray and company dancer Heather McArdle blow slightly in a breeze. Certain events happen only for seconds. The lights change without warning, or go out. At the beginning, Ermira Goro, McArdle, and Thomas pull, laughing, at their skirts or the panels that hang from their broad sashes (costumes by Wendy Winters). Soon after, Goro and Thomas are dangling backward in harnesses, swinging and twisting, their feet still on the floor. Later, there's a knock on the large doors at the rear; Hamilton Monteiro and Pedro Osorio bring in a couple of tables, and the women tell them where to put them. Then Young and Thomas, inert on the tables, are gently manipulated by two others who act in scrupulous unison. From the ordinary to the hallucinatory.

Some tasks are daring, others eccentric. McArdle has to maintain her balance on one low table while it's wheeled around and tilted into a ski slope; Goro must be kept beneath it whatever happens. Osorio and Monteiro attach themselves to opposite ends of ropes thrown up over pulleys, becoming both puppeteers and puppets. One goes down, the other rises. Goro gets her blouse onto a hanger on a clothes rack that holds costume changes, while still wearing the blouse. Then she tries unsuccessfully to walk along pushing the rack while talking about what a great addition to the choreography this act could be.

Another recent work, *Bent*, set to an insistent score by Mio Morales, is a rich trove of Young's fierce and fluent movement style, in which dives to the floor and into others' arms are not mindless displays of exuberant physicality but the way these people communicate. When McArdle, Osorio, and Marc Mann slide, roll, and vault over, under, and around one another, they're negotiating some intricate business. So are the five (including Tzeni Argyriou) who travel along a diagonal in an intricate cluster, shifting their roles within it. Nothing in Young's works is generalized; the sensuality, the tenderness, the sense of adventure seem intrinsic to the moment and anchored to life.



Suspended animation: Ermira Goro and Colleen Thomas in *Rein, Bellow* (photo: Richard Termine)

