

## Hip-Hop in Mixed Company of Swans and Other Woodland Creatures

The fifth and final program of this year's Fall for Dance Festival was like a day at the cinema: the dancing equivalent of a short film, two cartoons and, at long last, a

**GIA  
KOURLAS**

**DANCE  
REVIEW**

movie. The program, presented on Friday at City Center, got off to a ponderous start with a work that had its origins as a Sadler's Wells London production. While that connection doesn't automatically mean clunker, there are trademarks to such imports: ever-torquing limbs and more than a dash of melodrama.

The program's opener (the counterpart of the short film), Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui's "Faun," a retelling of Nijinsky's "Afternoon of a Faun," had that touch and more. (At least the more part made me laugh.) In their attempt to copulate — a sequence of spread-legged, interlocking poses — the dancers James O'Hara and Daisy Phillips looked as if they were reproducing the underwater scenes from the 1980 film "Blue Lagoon."

With his floppy blond curls and high-waisted trunks, Mr. O'Hara was an especially rubbery woodland creature; flinging his limbs loosely, he made much of a fluid spine. Ms. Phillips, her listless hair braided haphazardly and wearing an unflattering top that bunched at her waist by the otherwise excellent designer Hussein Chalayan, appeared with her arms stretched exaggeratedly behind her back. She had little to offer beyond her acrobatic contortions, but it hardly helped that her entrance marked a shift in the music, from Debussy to a New Age-sounding score by Nitin Sawhney. Where's a massage table when you need it?

More playful but just as disheartening was Richard Siegal's "O2JOY" (the first cartoon) performed by Bodytraffic, a Los Angeles company formed by Lillian Barbeito and Tina Finkelman Berkett. In this slight work set to jazz music — one low point was Andrew Wojtal's lip-syncing to "All of Me" — five dancers bombarded us with feigned effervescence, essentially sucking the joy right out of the dance. It was "Glee" for adults.

Mercifully, wit and choreo-



Inside The Times



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**Fall for Dance** Members of the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater performing Rennie Harris's work "Home" at the final program of this festival at City Center.

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graphic inventiveness emerged in the second half, beginning with Les Ballets Trockadero de Monte Carlo's "Black Swan" pas de deux (the other cartoon). This all-male company, revered for giving ballet a comedic twist while performing the steps with integrity, put Fall for Dance back on track.

Yakatarina Verbosovich (Chase Johnsey) played the black swan Odile with ferocious bite, and Innokenti Smoktumuchsky's miniature Prince Siegfried, performed by Carlos Hopuy, a Cuban dancer with soaring elevation and the right amount of timid bewilderment, just made you giggle.

They could have been mother and son.

Rennie Harris's "Home," a hip-hop work performed by Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, demonstrated the most sophisticated dancing of the night (the film). After so much nonsense, it was a relief to see a nonrepresenta-

tional work in which the cast members, led by the veteran Matthew Rushing, was transported to a different sort of dance universe. They performed only for themselves.

Mr. Harris's hazy, clublike setting came alive with snaky rhythmic steps and intertwining cho-

reographic patterns. As they bounced along to house and gospel music, splicing in and out of each other, the dancers created a majestic, pulsating elasticity onstage. It was a long journey, but a fitting end. Mr. Harris and the Ailey company brought dance home.