

## The three women in white

Ismene Brown reviews the work of choreographer Mark Baldwin and Richard Move's Martha Graham impersonation show

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THE Dance Umbrella is colourfully striped this year, and some strange clashes of entertainment can be found in various corners of London in the name of international modern dance. Last weekend, you could see the pure balletic choreography of Mark Baldwin at the Queen Elizabeth Hall, and a camp Martha Graham impersonation show by a visiting American at the Brick Lane Music Hall.

Baldwin has made modern ballets for the Royal Ballet and Scottish, and is trying to fuse ballet shapes with his weighty, modern liquidity in his own ever-changing group. His latest piece, *Julius Tomb*, focuses on the leggy, amusing former New York City ballerina Antonia Franceschi. In her late thirties, her prime qualities now are snappy limbs and a brittle solidity. She holds her balances steadily and tilts off them as stiffly as a pylon falling over. It's an exciting effect, though she occasionally looks as though she is parodying her Balanchine style.

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The Bournemouth Sinfonietta plays Luke Stoneham's attractively dreamy score in a golden glow on a dais, while a man in purple shirt and jeans (yeugh!) admires three women in white. It recalls Balanchine's *Apollo* (as Baldwin's *Towards Poetry* for Royal Ballet paid homage to Balanchine's *Agon*).

Such associations are distracting, because they suggest that Baldwin is into ballet-lite, when he clearly wants to play with ballet's kinetic possibilities.

For the rest we had *Homage*, a witty little thing in silence, and *A Collection of Moving Parts*, made in 1996 for Lynn Seymour among others. Set to Chopin (cheerfully played by Bill Stephenson), this is a funny and individual quartet, with four highly contrasted dancers and a stylish dab of schmaltz.

Franceschi takes over the Seymour part, displaying her glorious X-shaped arabesque in tight black trousers. I liked Hilary Briggs, a surging little dancer with very musical phrasing.

Brick Lane Music Hall is, misleadingly, in Islington, and the Islington dance crowd absolutely adored Richard Move's Martha Graham impersonation show. He is a celebrity in New York, a giant of a man in chignon and glittering gowns, parodying the great innovator as a professional legend. It's more a Marthagram than a true joke at the sophisticated level of those fine dance parodists the *Trockaderos*.

His British guest acts weren't up to much either - until the special appearance by the wonderful Mark Morris in a nightshirt, with a music-hall-style solo about the first hot-air balloon ride (narrated deadpan on a period-style tape).

We met every national representative taking the trip, we saw the balloon rise, we saw its panic on meeting a cloud (Morris stuffs cotton wool in his mouth), and watched its ghastly fate. Hilarious. For the rest of the tour, ballerina Deborah Bull is his substitute.

- Mark Baldwin is touring until Nov 6 (information: 0171 379 7474). Richard Move is touring until Nov 3 (information: 0181 741 5881)