



(continued from page 114) you want to do—the expectations from the culture are nonexistent.

**DS: Let me leap to my next question. As someone who has worked with both the Madonnas and the Mikhail Baryshnikovs of the world, would you care to characterize the difference between the so-called commercial head and the classical head?**

**KA:** Well, again, I think the art side—let's say the Baryshnikov side—is a more meditative, internal investigation of how consciousness works, how the mind's journey can be reflected in the body. The pop-culture side, however, is probably more narrative. It's more about storytelling, not reflection. It has to be about what's familiar because if you have to sell to 13-year-old girls, it has to be something pretty simple.

**DS: Would you talk about the brand-new piece you're doing at New York's Joyce Theater in March? I know very little about it.**

**KA:** Yeah, me neither! Before I make a piece I find it virtually impossible to say anything that actually turns out to be correct. It's only in the making, when you get in the room with the dancers, that the whole thing comes together.

**DS: But in terms of the casting, don't you have a multicultural slant to this project?**

**KA:** To a certain extent. I love that all these nationalities as well as races are represented: Chinese, half-Chinese half-Jewish, Filipino, Japanese, black, white, perfect blonde, Indian—the whole mixture, which is just what the world is today. In one section of the piece I'm going to use this layering of different cultures and styles of dance. Kung fu permutates into Bharatanatyam into voguing. It really explores the universal grammar of the body. After all, the body has only a few muscles and joints, and every single physical form uses them basically in the same way. So if you go deep into them, you can find a way that the body is universal. These forms can all meld together in a beautiful hybrid.

**DS: How do you choose a piece of music?**

**KA:** Music has become one of the hardest things. I have been trying to find music that has architecture, fantastic timbres, rhythms and yet leaves a lot of space so the dance can be the leading partner. Lately I've been doing pieces with our wunderkind Thomas Adès, who is composing great new classical music that has real feeling for images, real emotion.

**DS: Is there something audiences take away from all your dancing and your art? Is there a message?**

**KA:** Well, that's a big question. *[laughs]* So much of it is just an experience of absolute beauty. So, here's a funny thing: I am directing the Venice Biennale of Contemporary Dance.

**DS: When is that?**

**KA:** It's this June and July. I get to invite companies from around the world that I think are doing innovative work. For the closing party, I'm doing my piece *Rave*, which is incredibly exuberant. Forty French ballet dancers are coming to do that. I just spoke with a friend who is working as a costume designer in Bollywood, and he is going to find me some Indian dancers. We're going to bring in all these virtuoso street-culture performers, like voguers from New York, and then we're going to have a huge party. There will be individual raves, and then we're going to do a finale where everybody works together.

**DS: Sounds great. I think we're done, kiddo.**

**KA:** Thanks for all the good questions. Bye.

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**David Salle has a show of new paintings this month at the Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac in Paris. Above (from left): Sharmilla Desai, Cheryl Sladkin, and Ben Harris in *Time Is the Echo of the Axe Within the Wood* (2004). Photo: MAX VADUKUL.**