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PETER BOAL & COMPANY

TUES.-SUN., MARCH 16-21



IN A DESERVING SIDESHOW to the epochal Balanchine Centennial, one distinguished New York City Ballet principal dancer—and three of his cohorts—present a week of polished contemporary dance at the Joyce Theater.

Admired for the purity and depth of his performances, Peter Boal has enjoyed a rare 20-year reign as an NYCB darling, with leading roles in more than 60 ballets and close work with Balanchine, Peter Martins, Jerome Robbins, Twyla Tharp and others. An early indication of talent—and a crucible of company loyalty—came at 16 when, at Balanchine's request, Boal turned down an offer from Baryshnikov to join American Ballet Theater. At NYCB, Boal distinguished himself in two Balanchine staples, the stripped-down neo-classical masterpiece *Apollo* and the biblical narrative

Prodigal Son, a work many dancers botch on account of its dramatic demands. Boal, now inching toward 40, also teaches at the School of American Ballet, cultivating a new generation of NYCB male dancers.

This week's program is a follow-up of sorts to last year's Peter Boal, "Solos," an hour-long showcase of his skills included in the Joyce's Altogether Different Festival. For that project, Boal commissioned work from three modern choreographic talents, the choicest fruit of which was Wendy Perron's *Tuesday Night in Memphis*, a meditation on American masculinity and fatherhood that began with Boal literally running in place. It was, and is, an unusual role reversal for choreographers to be hired hands for a dancer's show—Baryshnikov was the single, impressive precedent for Boal's foray. The performance itself, a demanding hour of solo modern work, also squelched any doubts about Boal's durability. Though his raw virtuosity may be diminished, his dancing is still calm and secure with an attractive air of intelligent involvement.

There's nothing particularly revolutionary about Boal's line-up this week. In addition to a modern classic Twyla Tharp made for Baryshnikov in the early 90s—*Pergolosi*, a cheeky number that teases ballet through choreographed missteps—the remaining choreographers, William Forsythe, John Alleyne and Marco Geocke, are all heavies with NYCB experience. No radical departure in sensibility seems necessary, though. These are four of the best ballet dancers in the world tackling innovative and technically fierce contemporary dance. One additional draw is the opportunity to watch promising corps de ballet member Carla Korbes, recruited by Boal as a teenager in her native Brazil, step into a more prominent spotlight.

Joyce Theater, 175 8th Ave. (betw. 18th & 19th Sts.), 212-242-0800, call for times, \$40.

—Emily Laroque