HUMPHREY-WEIDMAN DANCERS TRUE EXPONENTS OF AMERICAN ART

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THE SALT LAKE TRIBUNE,

SUNDAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 27

Sanity, Logic Mark Work Of Group

Choreographic Patterns Have Fundamentals of Basic Forms

BY MARJORY M. FISHER The News Music Editor

American dancers are coming into their own. When the history of dance as an American art form is written several generations hence, methinks it will be Doris Humphrey and Charles Weidman who will be credited with the creation—or evolution, if you prefer—of a dance art most typical of the land of their birth. At least their first San Francisco performance in the Cuman Theater yesterday afternoon convinced us that the Humphrey-Weidman combination has something which no other dance group in the passing parade of dance has seemed to pos-

Whether one calls that quality sanity, straightforwardness, forthrightness or just sound logic makes little difference. The fact remains that said distinctive quality is there. And so are those other two very necessary things known as form and content. Furthermore, there is a total absence of anything suggesting cults or mystic rites. It is an honest form of presentation, dealing with basic fundamentals. The Humphrey-Weidman combination produces a pictorial art in terms of movement which, translated into musical terms, might well be termed

Yesterday's program opened with "To the Dance"—a finely moving salutation which served to introduce various dance motifs and develop them into a visual fugue altogether

Gay Tale

Then, to prove that the modern dance need not be too serious to be highly entertaining, the company produced a "fairy tale for tired business men" called "The Happy Hypocrite." It proved delectable satire replete with humor and action having to do with a certain Lord George Hell who attended a banquet with La Senora Gambogi but left her to pursue a naive country lass who was looking for a husband with the face of a saint. Just how Lord George Hell became Lord George Heaven and brought the story to a happy ending (thanks to the Merry Dwarf who was also a Cupid) made a gay fantasy which brought to light the excellent solo ability of different members of the group.

among these, Jose Limon was outstanding as the mask-maker, and his subsequent appearances further proved he is Mr. Weidman's rival for chief male honors. Edith Orcutt as the Dwarf (a cute, Puckish Cupid) and Katherine Litz as the saintseeking lass also won solo honors as did William Bales, Sybil Shearer (as the scorned Senora), George Bockman and Katherine Manring.

More Abstract

Fantastic costumes and headdresses helped to keep the episode definitely in the realm of satirical fancy, and the whole of "The Happy Hypocrite" kept the audience chuckling as happily as any creation of Trudi Schoop's.

The "New Dance," which concluded the program, represented the growth of the individual in relationship to his fellows in an ideal state. Such was its stated aim; and such was its general effect.

This American dance group is equally adept in working in farflung linear spatial patterns and in circular and three dimensional forms. They seem to have taken the best the classic ballet and the various modern idioms have had to offer and recast them into a new American dance form which has clarity and purpose throughout an especially wide and unrestricted range of movement.

Doris Humphrey and Charles Weidman should bring their group here annually, as do the famous European aggregations, and should dance to capacity audiences. They offer an impressive experience in dance art—one marked by good taste in its every aspect, from choreography to costumes and music.

Humphrey-Weidman Program Pleases

Movement, form and pattern of the dance should be an exposition of contemporary life, particularly American life, rather than continuing old ideas and forms borrowed from Europe, is the credo brilliantly illustrated in the performances given Saturday at the South high school by Doris Humphrey and Charles Weidman with their group of intelligent young men and women. These performances, introducing to Salt Lake City audiences one of the most distinctive dancing ensembles that has ever appeared here, were a triumphant vindication of their art ideals, and brought pleasure to

a fascinated and responsive audience. In the lecture-demonstration which was first on yesterday's pro- changes, dynamics giving great plained the modern idea and tech- emotional ideas, and run the entire nique of the dance, showing how gamut of experience." realism has been substituted for Dancing has been denied its right- music was always delightful, often symbolism and illusion, and com- ful place among the serious arts, positions are designed as reflections Miss Humphrey believes. It heretoof and commentary on every day fore has meant only amusement, enexperience.

Explains Theories

concerned with human values, their terms of the theater. point of view related to the times. Illustrate Technique The technical foundation of the

tertainment. The modern dance is also instructive, some times conveying protest against certain "Our dance themes as well as phases of life, some times serious movements, are modern, related to lideas presented under a humorous phases of life we all know about exterior, some times frankly playthat we ourselves have experienced,' ful, and ideas are presented not Miss Humphrey said. "They are only in terms of the dance but in

modern dance lies in the natural Their technique and its developbody action in relation to gravity. ment was illustrated in a series of lude is an exquisitely lovely state-Within this there is wide range of demonstrations given by Miss development, of course—rhythm | Humphrey and a group of girls, and

showing the characteristic move- "New Dance," the concluding part ments, development of simple ac- of which was given. tions, falls, leaps, and so on. Two
parts of Miss Humphrey's very
original "New Dance," joyous and
spirited in mood, were given, and
spirited in mood, were given, and in conclusion the witty, satiric idiom of the dance. Repeated curballet, "The Happy Hypocrite." tain calls attested the depth of based on a Max Beerbohm tale of audience interest. For the oppor-Lord George Hell and his transfor- tunity of seeing this foremost mation through love for an angelic modern dance group, praise is | country dancer to Lord George | owing Miss Virginia Tanner, largely | Heaven. Nura masks are used, and | responsible for bringing them here. the pantomime had the true comic

If one is unable at once to grasp the story of the dance, there are still the rhythm and precision of movement, the dynamic power, the admirable balance and coordination of muscles, and above all the exgram, a session at 2:15 p. m. which variety, and a new vocabulary of the quisite light grace of Miss drew an interested group of the use of the body employed. Body Humphrey herself, the pantomimic dance-minded, Miss Humphrey ex- | movements are all expressive of | mastery and verve of Weidman to make these dance compositions fascinating entertainment. And the merely the drum beat employed.

Most important on the evening program was "Theater Piece," highly effective in design and built in six episodes, presenting an ironic interpretation of the rivalry in the modern world, in business, sports, in love, in the theater. Miss Humphrey, who was the choregrapher, played the part of one who protests against this competition as destructive, and points the way to better living. Weidman's clever grotesqueries sharply contrasted with her role of the protestant. Her solo dance in the interment of the ideal she seeks, and a prophecy of the more harmonious

by Mr. Weidman and his group, life revealed in the design of the

MORNING WORLD-HERALD OMAHA, NEB.,

WED, FEBRUARY 23, 1938

Dance Artists Are Lauded

Beauty, Gracefulness Found at Concert

By Keith Wilson

Both Mr. Weidman and his partner are superb pantomimists and there is more drama than music in much of their dancing. Moreover, they chose to do light things. many of them comic, several satiric and none tragic. The Omaha audience laughed loudly and enjoyed them all.

Particularly did they like "Theatre Piece," described as "a dance of experience in a place of conflict and competition." The dance is symbolic of a business office and its mad pace—the stenographers on a man hunt—later of a stadium in which two dancers symbolic of football teams tackled and patted each other on the back.

Highlight of "Theatre Piece" was a sequence in which Weidman and two of the girl dancers burlesqued three hams doing a dramatic scene. Most effective was "The Race," in which the thesis of "Theatre Piece" was summed up in a mad, but rhythmic and altogether coherent foot race, the runners near exhaustion. Miss Humphries symbolized revolt against the pointless rivalry and in "Interlude" danced the only harmonious sequence of the dance.

There were two other parts of the concert, the last, a "New Dance," which was actually a sequel to "Theatre Piece," was costumed in rust and blue. The "New Dance" resembled popular dancing in some respects and there was a faint resemblance to the big apple. In the opening set of dances, Miss Humphries interpreted "Variations in a Theme of Handel" and Mr. Weidman, Jose Limon and George Bockman did a dance called "Traditions" in which each of the three dancers gradually and singly changed the form of their dance. The audience liked especially "Exhibition Piece" a fluffy bit of crinoline mockery with the stars and Mr. Limon.

WASHINGTON D.C HERALD, FEB 3 1938

CAPITAL ENTRANCED WITH PERFORMANCE OF NOTED DANGERS

By JEAN STANSBURY

Doris Humphrey and Charles Weidman, with their dance group, shot like a meteor across the Washington sky and were gone. And Washington is the poorer in realization that they are gone but infinitely wealthier with the memory of the performance they gave him in the Roosevelt High School audi-

Humphrey and Weidman are a peculiarly happy combination in that they add to their combined dancing and choreographic talent the unusual spectacle of a man and woman who are perfect complements one to the other. Humphrey's fine drawn, high E femininity is balanced delicately by Weidman's definite masculine dominance and strength.

The program Tuesday night was all, and a little more, than could be asked for. Some of the numbers, particularly the Prologue and Behind the Walls scenes from Theater Piece, were a little too prolonged for the importance of their message to the audience. Miss Humphrey's barbed satire lost a little of its venom by the over-emphasis in those two scenes. The tempo in most of the other scenes, however, kept the entire audience, even the standees, on their toes.

It would seem to be a certainty that America has a definitely crystallized dance form of her own and that Humphrey and Weidman are the chemists who have given us the basic formulae Their insistence on line and form throughout, even in Miss Humphrey's most abstract solo in Interlude, from Theater Piece, the irony yet optimistic strength of every movement is peculiarly Amer-

Jose Limon, featured dancer with the group, is materialized thunder to Charles Weidman's dynamic grace. Whenever, however, and wherever Washington sees dancing, Washington will have to remember the Humphrey-Weidman group and the birth of a national ballet that need bow to none.

CLEVELAND NEWS, FEB. 5 1938

IDAN MARINE

Humphrey, Weidman Present Next Successor to the Ballet

BY WILLIAM N. GATES

surely is, in the ancient history of freedom. dance, the next great successor to To Balance the Program the ballet.

just as there is a rhythm, which is formed the two larger works, clever detail is found to have rolled a thing of joy. In the hands of peculiar to it. Humphrey and "Theater Piece," composed except by leaving in its wake only a de- Humphrey and Weidman and of Weidman are past masters of this for one part by Miss Humphrey, licious tickle. For that reason the this group the dance has become a stagecraft. It appeared in their and "The Happy Hypocrite," a work might be more happily sa- thing flexible, luminous and strong.

People ask where the modern in the smallest dance movement. standing and recently revised and something should be done to rescue dance is going. Doris Humphrey The opening "To the Dance" in-troduces an audience to all the rich re-presented. These two works sup-from the muffling and mumbling and Charles Weidman, with elements of repetition and contrast, plied a nice balance in program- which it suffered last night. their group, last night estab- of dynamics and of design in space, matic contrast, the first as a relished that the modern dance without encumbrance of story or action to modern life communiis here—here with an illimitable well-constructed movement, which movement, the second as a trans- George has not only brilliance but wealth of vocabulary and of are the stuff of finished dance com- lation into dance-pantomime of character study. Katherine Litz matter to communicate therein, position. The concluding "Varia- Max Beerbohm's witty "Fairy Tale as Jenny shows an uncommon feelcouched in superb formal de- tions and Conclusions" would make for Tired Men." a breath-taking finale to any pro- For those in search of American Orcutt's Cupid, slightly drunk with gram. Its primarily thematic treat- ballet, let them look upon "The the fun of her sly tricks, is lovely. If their performance last night at ment carries it beyond the mere Happy Hypocrite" and rest from "Theater Piece" is a remarkable Severance hall failed to elicit the present to the permanence and the their labors. From the outrageous work. It would be better off withbox-office approval of society, it is truth which is a symphony. With dinner dance with which it opens out programmatic comment, for because their art is running sev- all its compactness of design, or to the final ecstatic gambols of what it conveys is actually untranseral years ahead of society's in- perhaps because of that, the ulti- Lord George Heaven (formerly latable in words. Miss Humphrey's vertebrate consciousness. For here mate feeling is one of complete Hell) with his naive Jenny Mere, solo Interlude reveals some of the

program arrangement, as well as | Wiedman composition of long | vored in a smaller hall. Certainly

the action is compact of such rib- most beautiful dancing seen in bings, such full-blooded sarcasms, these many years in Cleveland. as are pure Weidman. The flow of The technical sureness and the There is a stagecraft to the dance, Between these numbers were per- the action is so swift that often its freedom of the group as a whole is

Weidman's miming of Lord ing for comedy and style, and Edith