

New York Times

Dance in Review

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Dances for Wave Hill Wave Hill 249th Street and Independence Avenue Riverdale, Bronx Saturday, Sunday, Aug. 1 and 2

With its meadows, greenhouses and hilltop views of the Hudson River, Wave Hill is a spectacle in itself. On Saturday afternoon this beautiful city-owned garden served as a backdrop for works by three choreographers. The presentation was the first in a series of programs offered under the auspices of Dancing in the Streets.

Each choreographer used a different area of the park and emphasized a different aspect of the space.

Sham Mosher turned a grove of trees into a mysterious wilderness in "Symbiosis." As he burst his way out of a mound of peat moss, he appeared to be a forest animal. He hunched himself up, loped about, sniffed the air around him and crawled through the foliage, often letting it serve as camouflage.

No other creature was visible. Nevertheless, the solo conjured up a whole realm of mighty, and possibly dangerous, presences far removed from 20th-century human society. The eeriness was enhanced by the accompaniment provided by Adam Plack, who chanted, moaned, beat sticks together and played the didjeridoo, an Australian aboriginal wind instrument made from a hollow tree branch.

The other presentations celebrated Wave Hill as a trimmed and cultivated pleasure grounds. Marta Renzi staged "The Wedding Dance" in the shade of some large trees, and her festivity was a reminder that weddings are often held in gardens. These party guests -- all of them members of Ms. Renzi's Project Company -- were of various ages, and they danced to chipper music by Steve Elson played by an ensemble under his direction.

The choreography was suitably jolly. Yet the work would have gained in warmth as well as wit if Ms. Renzi had given her partygoers more distinctive personalities. This was a wedding attended by character types rather than individuals.

Martha Bowers, who directs a group called Dance/Theater/Etcetera, blurred the distinctions between art and reality in "Root and Branch." The men and little boys who performed this piece to a taped collage were fathers and sons in real life. What they did on the lawn that served as the setting was what many dads and lads do on summer afternoons. They sprawled on the grass, tossed balls and Frisbees back and forth and played games. These ordinary activities gradually became more choreographically complex. Ensemble movements resembled square-dance patterns. There were feats of balance. And the conclusion was a happy hullabaloo in which the performers pelted one another with water-filled balloons.

"Root and Branch" was both a charming display of parental and filial affection and a tribute to parks as social centers.