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2 Troupes That Pose A Contrast

By JENNIFER DUNNING
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The matching of the Alpha-Omega Theatrical Dance Company and the Rod Rodgers Dance Company in a program on Saturday afternoon at Marymount Manhattan Theater was both fortunate and unlucky.

Mr. Rodgers is a veteran New York modern-dance choreographer who specializes in abstract, somewhat distanced dances. The younger choreographers of Alpha-Omega tend to go for hot and sleek effects in dance whose explosiveness threatened to overwhelm the more serene and occasionally dispirited work by Mr. Rodgers.

It was good to see "Tangents" again, though, for that 1968 signature piece by Mr. Rodgers is as luminous as ever. Flowing, unforced motion pours out here in deceptively simple stage patterns, performed by three supple ritual figures holding short sticks that extend their body lines and occasionally add percussive sound to the score by John Cage and Lou Harrison. The exquisite dancers were Felicia Kennerly, Andrew Branche and Kayoko Sako.

The other outstanding Rodgers piece was "El Encounter," danced by Kevin Gaudin and Ms. Sako to music by Chick Corea. There is a compelling, sometimes slightly menacing stillness at the heart of what appears to be a tightly circumscribed modern-dance adagio duet for uncommitted lovers and not at all the depiction of a woman's encounter with death in an elevator, as specified by program notes.

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Alpha-Omega presented a similarly rooted duet called "Goodbye," choreographed by the company director, Enrique Cruz DeJesus, to music by Howard Hewett. Also a standout, "Goodbye" was an emotionally complex portrait of hesitant, worldly-wise lovers, poignantly played by Mr. DeJesus and Donna Clark.

Andy Torres's witty "Senor Blues," a group jazz piece performed to music by Horace Silver, epitomizes the company style. And families of smaller and larger sorts were the subjects of Gary DeLoatch's wistful, celebratory "Umeus" and George Faison's forgiving portrait of a hip, corrosive youth culture in "Mad Pain."

A guest artist, Kim Grier, performed with both companies in the program, which was dedicated to the memories of Nanette Bearden, a dance director, and Leni Wylliams, a dancer and choreographer.

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