



## DANCE: THIS WEEK -- Legacies, and the Artists Who Escape Them; Rod Rodgers: Beyond 'Black' Choreography

By JENNIFER DUNNING  
Published: March 21, 2004

ROD RODGERS went his own way through four decades of a career in modern dance that ended with his death in 2002. He avoided the stereotypes that settled onto many other black New York choreographers in his time, becoming as well known for his abstract pieces as for dances that drew on the experiences of black Americans. The Rod Rodgers Dance Company will pay tribute to his quiet legacy with "Don't Tell Me Who I Am," a mini-retrospective that begins a four-day engagement on Thursday at La MaMa in the East Village. The program will include a new work by Sean Curran, a longtime friend, and an homage by Kayoko Sakoh, a company member.

"He was a political activist, dating back before the 60's," said Kim Grier, the company's artistic director. "This is one of the reasons his company came about. He felt that he wanted to create a company and have a voice. He felt an individual should be able to explore creation from his own experience, his own personal heritage." The program's title comes from a 1968 essay by Rodgers in Negro Digest, in which he wrote: "It is simply a question of what takes precedence in the creative act: my total living experience, or those experiences which I consider particularly relevant to my blackness."

The retrospective will include "Wayfaring Stranger" and "Jazz Fusions." "I selected 'Wayfaring Stranger' because I believe it was one of his favorite male solos and it helped to give us, to give me, an image of Rod's spirit and energy still being here and alive with us," Ms. Grier said. "Jazz Fusion" represents the delight Rodgers felt in exploring modern dance movements with jazz music.

Ms. Grier has had to fill in some gaps in dances left incomplete, but she said she felt confident about that. "Rod always wanted me to choreograph," she said. "In some of our work I would just do small or transitional phrases, because I felt that that was my area as a rehearsal director." She has been troubled at his lack of guidance now. But at times she feels his presence, she said, and hears his voice saying, characteristically, "perhaps." Rodgers tended to suggest, she said, rather than dictate.

Today, the company has its own building on East Fourth Street, as well as a youth ensemble and a school. "We plan to continue Rod's legacy as long as we're supposed to," Ms. Grier said. "And I hope that goes on forever, even after me." JENNIFER DUNNING

Photo: Rod Rodgers felt that his most important heritage was his alone.

Get the full newspaper experience, and more, delivered to your Mac or PC. Times Reader 2.0: Try it FREE for 2 full weeks.

SIGN IN TO E-MAIL

PRINT



Log in to see what your friends are sharing on nytimes.com  
Privacy Policy | What's This?

Log In With Facebook

### What's Popular Now

Ads by Google

what's this?

**Official BizFilings Site**

Expert Staff & Step-By-Step Process Make Incorporating Easy & Accurate!  
www.BizFilings.com

**Medicare plans in NY**

Get Fast, Free Answers About Medicare Plans for You!  
www.EmblemGuide.com

**Statoil**

Leading Oil & Gas Company on the Norwegian Continental Shelf  
www.Statoil.com

**Newspaper Nat'l Network**

NNN We Make Newspapers National One Stop Access to Major USA Papers  
nntlp.com

**REI Loves to Talk Camping**

Gear, How-To, Where to Go, Expert Advice, Checklists & More!  
www.REI.com/Camping

**Latest Local News**

Get Top Stories, Latest News & More Right From Your Browser For Free!  
www.HeadlineAlley.com

Advertise on NYTimes.com

### MOST POPULAR

E-MAILED | BLOGGED | SEARCHED

1. The Vanishing Mind: Money Woes Can Be Early Clue to Alzheimer's
2. Op-Ed Columnist: The Grand Old Plot Against the Tea Party
3. Essay: Why Sisterly Chats Make People Happier
4. Op-Ed Columnist: Give Obama a Break
5. Op-Ed Columnist: Can the Dude Abide?
6. Op-Ed Columnist: It's Morning in India
7. Op-Ed Contributor: How the Banks Put the Economy Underwater
8. Op-Ed Contributor: The 150-Year War
9. At Rally, Thousands — Billions? — Respond
10. Europe's Plagues Came From China, Study Finds

Go to Complete List »

SIGN IN TO E-MAIL

PRINT



### Domesticities: Robert Evans

ALSO IN VIDEO »

Dr. Pogue's amazing earbuds

Sign up for Focus, a video and multimedia weekly e-mail

nytimes.com

VIDEO

ADVERTISEMENTS

Find your dream home with

