

Los Angeles Times

SATURDAY, MAY 15, 1999

Alienation in Form and Movement

Dance Review

By LEWIS SEGAL
TIMES DANCE CRITIC

Kitty McNamee's locally based Hysterica Dance Company specializes in dances of transformation—fast, aggressive showpiece movement in which sexy stretches become grotesque contortions, hands warp into claws, powerful dancers grow painfully disabled, and a strutting, muscular, tattooed jock turns flamboyantly effete. In her plotless mood- and image-dominated pieces, the world is a dangerous place and radical change represents either a survival mechanism or just one more hazard to dance through.

At the Barnsdall Park Gallery Theatre on Thursday, McNamee's first full-evening creation found her working hard, with increasing surety, to achieve a structural sophistication matching her eclectic and demanding movement vocabulary. Divided into two parts, her 50-minute "Water and the Vell" contrasted nature imagery and urban activities—with brief pantomime passages depicting the cooping up and drinking of lake water in Part 1 versus typing and using the telephone in Part 2.

In both sections, however, the intimacy of dance duets inevitably led to abandonment and a curious kind of mental vacancy, as if the partners forgot about one another as soon as they stopped touching—and sometimes before. Her six-member company remained impressive: the men (Bubba Carr, Ryan Heffington and John Jacques), powerful technicians as well as distinctive personalities; the women (Nancy Anderson, Stephanie Landwehr and Shari Nyce) especially adept at giving pop dance clichés maximum credibility and

then showing the exploitation and fear underneath.

To fuel the irony, melancholy and pop forms in her choreography, McNamee used music tapes dominated by Kurt Weill songs, some much older than the credited "Lost in the Stars." Indeed, the final ensemble seemed to borrow and physicalize the same hopelessness and alienation expressed in Weill's great mock-sentimental ballad "Youkali": the sense that "the release we all wait for/ . . . The land where you leave all your troubles behind" just doesn't exist.

DANCE REVIEW

Hysterica performs its first full-evening creation. Reviewed by Lewis Segal. F14