

DANCE

May 26 - June 1, 2005

Visiting professor

David Dorfman—older, wiser and awaiting tenure—celebrates his company's 20th anniversary

By **Gia Kourlas**

Life has changed drastically for David Dorfman since his last engagement at the Joyce Theater seven years ago. He has left the East Village—where his jovial presence was a constant, reassuring sight—for New London and an associate professorship in dance at his alma mater, Connecticut College. He married his longtime dancer, Lisa Race; they now have a four-year-old son, Samson. The choreographer's father, whom he adored, passed away at the ripe age of 92. "My dad would have wanted me to have a teaching job," Dorfman recalls with a laugh. "He asked about it every day."

Dorfman may be weighed down by new obligations, but basically he is the same funny, fast-talking Chicagoan he's always been. Beginning Tuesday 31, his company, celebrating its 20th year, returns to the Joyce with two new works and last season's *Lightbulb Theory*, a quartet that begins with an extraordinary solo for the choreographer, created in honor of his father; the unsentimental dance that follows—set to a piano score by Michael Hall—is no less spellbinding.

For his Joyce season, Dorfman also includes the new *approaching some calm*, a duet for himself and Race. Created as a sequel to 1994's *approaching no calm*, the new work features athletic partnering but it is also full of quiet, mysterious moments. "I'm so in awe of Lisa," Dorfman, 49, says. "She's 46 going on 26, and her body can do anything. Theoretically, we're picking up where we left off, but a lot of years have passed. We were pals doing that first duet, but everyone saw it as a romantic piece. Now

we're companions—and the dance feels like it could be more romantic. But sometimes we feel like we're on the edge of exhaustion with Sam and the responsibilities of a new



JUMP TO IT Company members perform David Dorfman's evocative *Lightbulb Theory*.

life." For that reason, the vocabulary of exertion is on display: "We used to collapse after doing the older duet, even though we were so much

younger," he recalls. "It was hard, but I've never believed in making dances look effortless. What is effortless in life?"

The other new work is *Older Testaments*, set to a score by the Klezmatiks' Frank London, whom Dorfman met while choreographing *Green Violin*, a musical that played in Philadelphia

and explored Soviet Yiddish theater. "I liked being motivated by his music, and I knew that his range was beyond klezmer—he wouldn't try to re-create either folk dancing or a wedding dance," Dorfman explains. For the choreographer, who describes himself as a "super pacifist," the resulting piece explores cultural identity, which alludes to the conflict between Arabs and Jews; as usual, Dorfman balances movement with irreverent text.

"I'm always looking at pieces in terms of the personal and the political," he says. "I don't think that a deep love for one type of person means that there needs to be a hatred for another kind." As the title indicates, Dorfman has some wicked fun with religion (Paul Matteson, for example, stands in a Plexiglas structure that looks a bit like a church and portrays the fictional Dick from the Bible). But the choreographer has incorporated less talking than usual; when the performers do speak, they play characters, not themselves. "We're trusting ourselves in a little different way than nice, congenial David Dorfman Dance," he explains.

The piece's concluding text is by company member Jennifer Nugent, who just had a baby and likely won't be performing this season: "She wrote this line, 'She leaves you with everything but herself,'" Dorfman recites. "I don't know exactly what it means, but it makes me think: What do we have? What is anyone's testament? I like being

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funny and ironic and, at my best, poignant, but I don't want to be pedantic. I want poetics. Even though I like talking dances, I love dances because the abstraction of it is poetry."

David Dorfman Dance is at the Joyce Theater Tuesday 31 through June 5.

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Chunky Move

American Ballet Theatre
(See Thu 26) Ravishing Russian ballerina Diana Vishneva graces ABT as a guest artist in *Don Quixote* (opposite Vladimir Malakhov). Other company highlights: *Theme and Variations* on Wed 1, with Sarah Lane and Herman Cornejo.

Chunky Move

(See Thu 26) This Australian company explores paranoia and fear in its dance-theater work *Tense Dave*.

David Dorfman Dance

(See Tue 31) David Dorfman celebrates his company's 20th anniversary with a season at the Joyce—his first in seven years.