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DANCE

Preview

Heaven can wait

David Dorfman Dance joins Joe Jackson in celebrating the seven deadly sins By **Gia Kourlas**

David Dorfman is obsessed with the notion of how an individual survives within a community. His dances may vary in terms of costume and music, but they all delve into similar themes of affection and intimacy. And while his tools—wry humor and eccentric, athletic movement—show up again and again, the overall results are always infused with new life.

This week, Dorfman, 42, presents his accomplished group of dancers in two major works: Along with a premiere, *A Cure for Gravity*, set to music from Joe Jackson's recent CD *Heaven & Hell*, there will be a refurbished version of his 1997 hit *Gone Right Back*. In the latter, expressionless dancers speak to each other to make seemingly simple requests; "Curt," Tom Thayer asks Curt Haworth, "could you move me?" Haworth changes Thayer's position repeatedly, until it's clear that his patience is growing thin. In another section, the delicate Jeanine Durning announces, "I'm not stuck. I can go forward; I can go backward.... I just choose not to go forward right now."

Inspired by the choreographer's own experience of ending a long-term relationship, *Gone* cleverly illustrates the inevitable glitches that occur when one tries to wrap up an affair or hang onto one that's not meant to be. In the updated version, Dorfman puts more emphasis on the actual movement sequences. "The speaking was the guts of the piece," says Dorfman. "The feedback I got was that the dance vocabulary could have been more specific and more powerful. I don't think the overall viewpoint has changed at all, but the movement is more distilled, kinetically exciting and to the point."

In *A Cure for Gravity*, Dorfman has tried something new. His dance is a theatrical response to Jackson's musical exploration of the seven deadly sins. The dancers wear shades of red and burgundy and bits of purple, and the sections are linked together like a richly painted medieval triptych. "It's a different approach and attachment to the music than what I've done in the past," he explains. "It's a bit more literal and formalistic, but at the same time, it still features the individuality of the dancers and movement innovation; it doesn't look like classical dance. We're still doing our thing of taking movement and subverting it—showing it upside down and inside out. We're just treating the music more fervently."

Dorfman and Jackson originally planned a full-fledged dance and music collaboration. During a brainstorming meeting, Jackson gave Dorfman the finished cassettes for *Heaven & Hell*; the choreographer immediately fell in love with it. "I took it to a teaching residency in Nebraska and thought, This is so cool—it's everything I always wanted to do," he remembers. "It has this big rock-

opera feeling, strings—that I'm a little bit afraid of, but that I adore—humor, power, drive and rhythm. I've always been afraid of going with rock & roll or popular music; my music has always been a bit more environmental or arty or whatever you want to call it. It's not like I've stayed away from rock & roll, but as far as taking something that you could play on the radio? I haven't done that."

A Cure might have been inspired by Jackson's music, but Dorfman stresses that it isn't a pantomimed depiction of pride or gluttony, for example; the sins aren't even listed with their corresponding music in the program, as they are on Jackson's CD.

"It's an abstract dance with a lot of passion and humanity," Dorfman explains. "There isn't a story, but there are moments of humanity and emotion. The idea of a community that coexists is very important. How they *do* it is almost the plot of the piece. And isn't that the point to our lives? How we mix with other people, events and institutions? Sometimes you don't need a big Broadway story to tell it."

David Dorfman Dance performs at the Joyce Theater through Sunday 25.

BREAKING UP IS HARD TO DO Lisa Race and Jeanine Durning work out their problems in *Gone Right Back*.

