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From the Limon Company, an Old-School Affirmation

Throughout the 2009-10 season, the 92nd Street Y has been celebrating 75 years of showcasing dance. Those 75 years have made it the oldest institution in the United States to be presenting dance in the same location, and they are years in which the choreographers Martha Graham, Doris Humphrey, Charles Weidman, Hanya Holm, Jose Limon, Pearl Lang, Katherine Dunham, Agnes de Mille, Erick Hawkins, Jerome Robbins, Merce Cunningham, Paul Taylor, Alvin Ailey, and Anna Sokolow have worked there.



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Those names belong to the great tradition of American modern dance and it seems to me that every visit I make to the 92nd street Y gives me a more detailed - often a changed - understanding of this tradition. A Friday lunchtime concert in January, for example, included dances by Mary Anthony, Daniel Nagrin, and Weidman, all stylishly and intelligently performed. Ms. Anthony, now in her 90's was there. I confess I hadn't heard of Nagrin before; two of his solos were danced by Shane O'Hara.

And, though I had long heard of Weidman, I had never seen any of his work. The pieces performed that day beautifully shaped, dancy, and musically intelligent excerpts from his setting of Bach's "Easter Oratorio"- showed me important aspects of his choreography that you seldom now hear about.

More blanks were filled in over the weekend when Limon Dance Company gave three performances at the Y; I caught Sunday afternoon's program. I first saw Limon choreography in 1976, but had somehow missed his own troupe until now; I am glad to make its acquaintance. It presented two rare dances by Limon himself and pieces by three other choreographers.

I was particularly glad to see two excerpts from Sokolow's "Rooms" (1955); 2010 is the centenary of Sokolow's birth, and though I've seen other works by her, I had never caught any part of "Rooms," a study of modern alienation to jazz music and her most famous creation. Nagrin's exuberant, appealing "Dance in the Sun" (1951) was the third solo I'd seen in six weeks by this choreographer. Two excerpts from Donald McKayle's "Heartbreaks" (1997) stood in nice contrast to each other.