

DANCE REVIEW

Rising, Arms Like Wings, Beneath Invisible Towers

By JENNIFER DUNNING

The Evening Stars dance festival used to be held in September in a small outdoor theater erected on the plaza between the two World Trade Center towers. Cancelled in 2001, the festival moved to Battery Park but there were no performances on Sept. 11 until this year, in a new setting near Bowling Green.

Helicopters flew back and forth across the night sky on Saturday, their whirring seeming to stir the earth below. Sirens wailed. But as the sky darkened, the beacon of light from ground zero shone up into the night, arching almost protectively over the audience. And onstage, three companies provided good examples of the wordless eloquence of dance, as Tom Healy, president of the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council and co-producer of the festival with the Joyce Theater, put it in a welcoming speech.

In truth the evening was a mite long on choral grandeur. José Limón's 1967 "Psalm," powerfully performed by the Limón Dance Company in a restaging by Carla Maxwell to music by John Magnussen, goes on too long and reiterates its themes too many times. But its shifting patterns and ensembles and its complex footwork are fascinating for about the first two thirds of the piece.

The falls, rises and clenching arms of its central solo (Robert Regala) say a great deal about despair and hope. In the heroic trio that follows (Mr. Regala, Kristen Foote and Roxane D'Orléans Juste), in which two women draw the man gradually back to life, "Psalm" resembles a moving sculptural tribute to the fallen of Sept. 11.

The five women of Buglisi/Foreman Dance also looked like statuary in Jacquelyn Buglisi's "Requiem," in this

case Niobes atop pedestals cloaked in their long skirts. Martha Graham, an important influence, might have loved that swirling fabric, though the luscious earth colors are more Buglisi than Graham. Until legs poke out like gawky tuberoses, everything is in the wrenching, reaching upper bodies and in the women's processions about the stage to Fauré's Requiem.

One of the evening's most affecting moments came with those soprano voices, in the requiem's Sanctus, rising into the equally weightless night air. The others came with Paul Taylor's "Promethean Fire," which closed the program. Choreographed in 2002 to sumptuous Bach scores, the piece has been described by just about everybody but Mr. Taylor as a response to Sept. 11. Like its title, the

dance suggests the unquenchable fire of life.

The movement is pure, relatively simple and even occasionally playful. Fear, anger and a yearning for safety merge in a central duet for Lisa Viola and Michael Trusnovec, who rise from an unheroic pile of bodies poised in lifts, arms spread like wings. But Mr. Taylor leaves it to his audience to think of rebirth. "Promethean Fire" was the perfect piece for this tribute



Richard Termine for The New York Times

Members of the José Limón Dance Company performing "Psalm" in the Evening Stars dance festival.