

REVIEW

Wellspring dancers create conditions for beauty

By Elizabeth Clark

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The dichotomy of Cori Terry's fluidity of forms and Wellspring artistic associate Michael Miller's jumpy, jerky approach has long provided a beautiful balance to concerts presented by the local modern dance company, Wellspring/Cori Terry & Dancers. Call the troupe's latest choreographer, Rachel Miller, the curvy line between that yin and yang -- a dual citizen who's beginning to choreograph a continent all of her own.

``Recommended Habitat" is Rachel Miller's first work choreographed for the Wellspring company, although several members participated in her memorable performance-poetry-meets-modern-dance event ``Prose in Motion" at Wellspring Theatre last year.

``Recommended Habitat" is less cohesively compelling than the other pieces in Wellspring's Spring Concert of Dance, which opened Thursday, but it does touch again on the promise ``Prose" showed. Its opening and closing segments, and particularly the segments in which stacks of dancers emulated the laborious motions of sloths, were wonderful.

Terry's latest premiere, ``Pulse," also touched on animalistic themes as it examined and celebrated the intricacy of the lives of modern women, featuring music from around the world -- AKA Pygmies, Gyorgy Ligeti's flamenco-like laments, Steve Reich and Lhasa -- and moods spanning a vast emotional longitude. The connection between the female dancers -- Alexis Harris, Jennifer Hudson, Rachel Miller, Francesca Pileci-Bates and Paula Rinaldo -- was palpable and reflective of the Rilke quote with which Terry introduced the piece: ``One cannot create beauty. One can only create circumstances favorable to it."

If one can create fun, or circumstances favorable to it, it's certainly Michael Miller, whose latest work, ``The Favorite Toy Of" is exactly that. The romp prominently features an unlikely dancer -- a mischievous kickball that mercifully behaved itself through most of the puckish work. The dance touches on school yard games like keep-

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Wellspring dancers create conditions for beauty, cont.

away and hide-and-seek in its first half and merges modern dance movement with swing in its fast-stepping close. Particularly clever is the choreography in which the dancers seem to become the inner machinations of a wind-up plaything, particularly the tumbling and synchronized movements of the two Millers.

Fans of Michael Miller's playful "Java Jive" are likely to drink in "Toy" as merrily as did a group of Boys and Girls Club members in attendance on Thursday. They gave "Toy" a hearty, whooping ovation, although they did express a collective "ew" at spying one dancer's leotard bloomers.

At least as welcome as the new works was the troupe's revisiting of the pieces that premiered at the 2005-2006 season's Fall Concert of Dance. Michael Miller's "Do Not Remove" -- sort of the modern dance equivalent of a David Lynch movie -- was all the more wonderfully perplexing and spasmodic on a second viewing, and Terry's triumph "Seeking Elsewhere" all the more moving, which is truly saying something.

Dance review

Wellspring Spring Concert of Dance -- Opened Thursday. Continues 8 tonight and Saturday night and 2 p.m. Sunday, Wellspring Theatre, 359 S. Kalamazoo Mall (Epic Center). \$20, or \$10 students, free for children 5 and younger. 387-2300.