

MUSIC & DANCE

DANCE REVIEW

19th edition of 'Spectrum' has little use for men

By LEWIS SEGAL

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If anything unified the wide-ranging 19th edition of the series "Spectrum: Dance in L.A." on Saturday at the Ivar Theatre, it was the sense that women embody the heart and soul of dance while men represent, at best, a special effect.

Rei Aoo's women's sextet, "Magma," immediately set the tone with its bold, percussive attacks and adroit format patterning. Fifteen pieces later, Shirley Martin's large scale "Rhythm Suite" embellished a similar celebration of female prowess with exotic props (parasols, fans) and even a lone male's gymnastic stunts. But women remained the essence.

In between came previously reviewed women's showpieces by Denise Leitner ("Pathways #10") and Joseph Allen Decker ("Mein Herr"), along with works by Darryl Retter (the upbeat "Good Luck") and Nalani Wilson (the downbeat "Just Let Me Cry") – too brief to make a real impact but boasting strongly focused women's dancing.

Holly Johnston's octet, "Door One, Left," had that and more: inventive gymnastics, magical changes of personnel and costume, a gathering intensity plus a loose-limbed authority all its own.

Among the women's solos, Loren Denker's "In Your Wake" provided a compelling physicalization of anger, suicidal despair and deep resilience, while Ellen Rosa's "Plank" exploited an utterly natural use of pointe technique (as everyone moved that way, all the time).

In a class by itself: Aleya's "Desert Collage," a delirious fusion of belly dancing, rap and jazz with choreographic and technical surety in its favor.

Men? You wanted men? "Spectrum" obliged with such pleasurable inclusions as the convivial tap duet "Shake It Up," featuring Rolondas Henricks and Hiroshi Hamanishi, and Jesse Jesse Abrecy's pithy street dance trio, "Just Friends."

However, men seemed an obnoxious intrusion in Tito Reyes' "Spot of T," a talky, impossibly scattered commercial charade, and something of an afterthought in Jennifer Nairn-Smith's trio "End-Troduction," which seemed primarily absorbed with experiments in pointe technique.

The male dominance in Allan McCormick's aggressive, unfinished-looking new septet, "Rivers of Silence," despite skillful execution, amounted to nothing more than beefcake gymnastic stunts superimposed on promising ensemble choreography.

Only William Lü in his lyrical "Red Autumn" duet with Aya Yoneyama enforced absolute equality and showed this "spectrum" that men can still dance with women without seeming either overbearing or irrelevant.

Aoo's and Martin's pieces had live accompaniment, and Reyes' piece featured an onstage DJ.