

James uses whole body and stage

Contrast is an intriguing aspect of art, not to mention life, with opposites attracting, ying and yang, ancient text set to modern sound, and other forms of polar-type associations. Contrast is often merely the result of circumstance.

WILLIAMSBURG

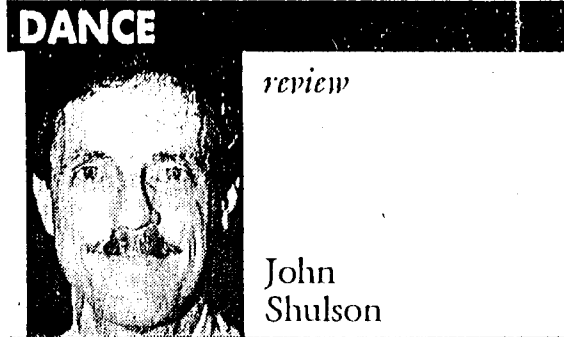
In the case of the Randy James Dance Works, which performed as part of William and Mary's tercentenary celebration, the contrast might have been circumstantial had it not been for the ensemble's sponsor—Orchesis, the college's modern dance company.

Orchesis consistently pleases us with its innovative direction, always encouraging and challenging its student dancers to explore creative dance, always displaying entertaining results.

It came as no surprise that Orchesis sponsored Dance Works and that the dance was modern, offering symbolic contrast between the tercentenary and the terpsichorean.

James, the ensemble's founder-choreographer-dancer, is decidedly modern in his approach. Far from being free of all structure, James' dance vocabulary is distinct. Its seemingly free expression is actually tightly devised and constructed movement. James finds success in dance that involves the entire body and the entire stage space, as evidenced by people flying through the air, rolling on the

The Randy James Dance Works, directed by Randy James, in "New, Used, Over It," "Endured Lull," "Mrs. Etta Baker's Kindhearted Blues," and "Susie & Swoosie's Soiree," presented by Orchesis, in Phi Beta Kappa Memorial Hall, Oct. 28.



floor, and attaching themselves to each other in gravity-defying positions.

Such dance requires physical fitness and talent. Dance Works' six dancers, which included James, were obviously up to the job, exhibiting impressive flexibility, strength, stamina, and understanding of this specific modern mode.

Four works cannot serve as a blanket description of James and his dance, but a similarity of form and content suggests that his dance is thematically based on universally-

shared emotions, ageless truths with contemporary applications. The centerpiece of this concept was carried out in the street-clothes costuming, though some was quirky, and the music, the sentiments of which were proclaimed in "Broken Hearted Blues" and "Who'll Take My Place When I'm Gone."

While not all the works were equally effective, all contained a sense of energy that sustained interest in all movement, playful and poignant. By far the most dramatic dance came with "Endured Lull," a male duet for James and Stephen Nunley. It was set to a brooding score from Scott Buch's "Floating City." Starting in silence, "Lull" was an aggressive work that seemed to suggest anxiety and turmoil. It ended with the pair exhausted from conflict, leaning on each other in a striking pose of resignation.

Also notable was "Mrs. Etta Baker's Kindhearted Blues," which depicted the ups and downs of life. Effective use was made of the silence between segments.

James' sense of humor was seen in "Susie & Swoosie's Soiree," its world premiere. A witty piece built around a dinner party, the work showcased the eccentricities of guests, nervous encounters, empty laughter, and the feeling of being alone in a crowd, and, ultimately, of being alone.