



July 2, 1997

Light and Heavy

Two local dance performances intoxicate their audiences in different ways.

By Tanya Ignacio

If it were reborn as a cocktail, choreographer Gregg Bielemeier's latest work would be a Campari soda or a gin fizz. Light and refreshing with enough zing to be interesting, *DropWaltz* combined Bielemeier's stylishly campy aesthetic and his idiosyncratic yet technically precise choreography.

Bielemeier is a perfectionist, and his *DropWaltz* cast, which included Kristin Young, Joan Findlay, Jae Diego, Eric Skinner, Mike Barber, Daniel Kirk, Jamey Hampton and Josie Moseley, was of exceptional caliber. Bielemeier's musical collaborators, 3 Leg Torso (Courtney von Drehle, Gabe Leavitt and Bela Balogh), are local dance's most creative accompanists; they took their cues from modern chamber music, Eastern European music and free improvisation. Lyndee Mah provided smooth-as-silk vocals.

As with previous Bielemeier endeavors, the non-dance elements of *DropWaltz* were as carefully crafted as its choreography. Bielemeier employs a stylist, which means costumes, makeup and hair styles were in perfect harmony. He also displayed a love of retro clothing, particularly women's fashions from the '50s, '60s and '70s; pale lipstick,

bell-bottom pantsuits and false eyelashes all made appearances in the show.

Silk robes and boxer shorts were the attire for one of the evening's highlights, "Man-O-Man." Hampton and Bielemeier entered on opposite sides of the stage and performed wild and lurching movements, mirroring each other in a way reminiscent of those old comedy skits in which a barely awake person peers into the bathroom mirror and tries to outwit his rebellious reflection. Hampton perfectly captured Bielemeier's movement while his expressive face contrasted with Bielemeier's mono-expression.

"Hey Lady," the concert's other stand-out, was a comic solo performed by Diego. Dressed like a peppermint stick in a striped party dress and accessorized with cotton-candy pink hair and false eyelashes, Diego exemplified the 1950s suburban housewife. She seemed to be going through some sort of withdrawal as she clutched a white purse while pulling frantically at her dress, she rubbed her legs and hurled herself to the floor. Diego's tense and frenetic display was made even more hilarious in contrast to Mah's fluid renditions of "Fly Me to the Moon" and "Fascination."

Another local troupe known for impeccable production values, Imago Theater is currently staging *Half Light*, co-artistic director Jerry Mouawad's adaptation of Gabriel Garcia Marquez's *A Sea Of Lost Time*.

Imago has always excelled at theater's physical components – music, visuals, design, performance – but with *Half Light*, Mouawad establishes a perfect balance between form and content.

In Imago's productions of Richard Foreman's *Samuel's Major Problem* and *Symphony of Rats*, Mouawad skirted the edges of sanity, rationality and perception. This time, he plays at the edges of consciousness. Three somnambulists (Mouawad, Katherine Peterson and Deirdre Atkinson) inhabit the murky realm between waking and dreaming. Mouawad, using a headset, alternates between reciting from the *Somnambulist Companion's Handbook* and narrating Garcia Marquez's story. He and the other two sleepwalkers also enact the

story with mask puppets, which are simple but effective.

The story takes place in a seaside town. One day, a curious rose smell emanates from the ocean. At first, only an old woman and a man named Tobias smell it, but it grows stronger until soon everyone is aware of it. Along comes Mr. Herbert, who announces that he is there to help and then persuades Tobias to swim down to the bottom of the sea.

Mouawad's experimental techniques rely on a combination of adroit physical timing – qualities that Mouawad, Peterson and Atkinson all possess to an exceptionally high degree. *Half Light* also seamlessly incorporates an inventive soundscape created and performed live by Waltzing Mice and well-designed lighting, film and slides.

Engagingly creative and cohesive, Imago's latest production is one of its best. If *DropWaltz* is a gin fizz, *Half Light* might be a good cognac.