



## Dance

### **What's the World Coming To?**

(excerpt)

Deborah Jowitt

Tuesday, November 11th 2003

The white strip crossing the Kitchen's black floor extends up an aisle to an improvised dressing area. But Walter Dundervill, Athena Malloy, and Tasha Taylor, who perform RoseAnne Spradlin's powerful Bessie-winning 2002 *under/world* on and around this "runway," don't seem to be parading fashionable attitudes or sexually titillating acts for the spectators. Unlike ABT's dancers, they direct their obsessions and fetishes to one another or try them on as if in a fitting room. They exit only to turn around and come back to fruitless, grinding labor.



Unlike ABT's dancers, they direct their obsessions and fetishes to one another or try them on as if in a fitting room. They exit only to turn around and come back to fruitless, grinding labor.

The first half, "Gravity Ball," begins like a folk dance. Dundervill and Malloy grab hands and make big, swoopy turns together, he wearing only a red bra, she only trousers. This motif recurs several times, more ruthlessly, with Taylor in the mix. In the often lavish dancing (to Gavin Bryars's sweet *Intermezzo* and Kenneth Atchley's *fountain\_1998.3* for the second part, "Night Sweating"), the three terrific performers move as if trying to get something out of their systems. But nothing gratifies them: not Dundervill and Taylor tickling each other and then he seeming to nurse at her breast;

not Dundervill trying to keep his mouth pressed against some part of a woman's body; not the three grinding their hips or spreading their legs; not Taylor hurling herself at the others and being thrown away.

The couple in Spradlin's new *Rearrangement (or a Spell for Mortals)* can't adequately express or assuage their discontent and frustration either. As it begins, Dundervill and Malloy roll and jackknife on the floor in patterned obsessiveness, clutching big red notebooks. Later, they manage to write two words before slamming the books down. They echo each other's big, full-bodied, skewed dancing and undulating fits, but only occasionally are they in unison. The sole time they touch, they squirm across the floor holding hands. Atchley's live-mixed score, utilizing feedback from a fountain in one of three tanks, builds bubbling into destructive floods. The two people are apt to disappear without warning from each other's lives. Spradlin's corrosive worlds can break your heart.