

## In Sampler: Old Faces, New Mood

In the years after Savion Glover's 1996 Broadway hit, "Bring In da Noise, Bring In da Funk," the hard-hitting, ferocious style popularized by the show spread like wildfire through the tap world, ratcheting up Mr. Glover's influence to ridiculously high levels. Until recently his imprint was still all over the festival circuit (though Mr. Glover himself was largely absent from the scene by this time), where it sometimes seemed that aspiring hoofers were doing their darndest to bust through the floor. Hard, loud and fast equaled good, an unfortunately reductive parrotting of Mr. Glover's artistry.

But all trends must end, and, if Friday night's Tap City event at Symphony Space was any indication, the "Noise/Funk" craze has finally waned. The finale of Tony Waag's annual festival sampled styles galore, but with a distinct tilt toward the gentler, more presentational end of the spectrum, including slick ensemble numbers, elegant period glosses and tight choreography infused with other types of dance.

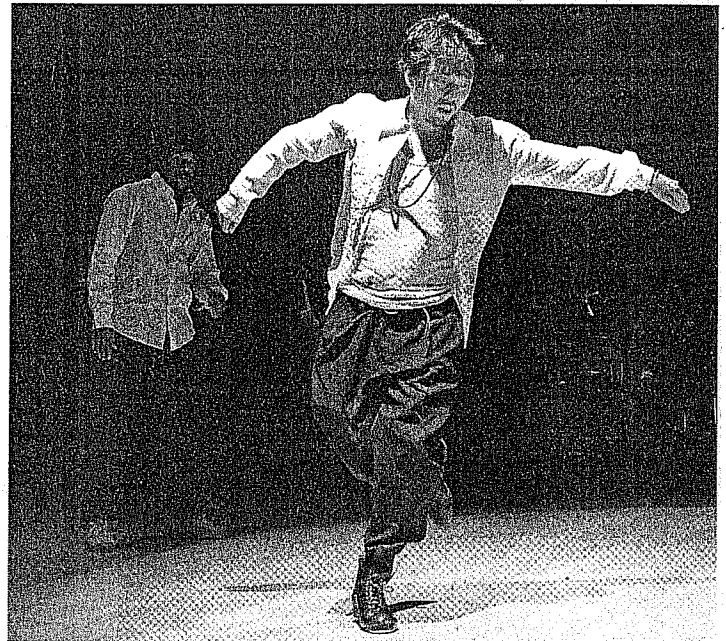
In a program packed with 20 numbers, misfires are inevitable. But the good far outweighed the bad. As befits an American art form, tap values the individual, and it was nice to see so many explorations.

During one of several appearances the irrepressible Mr. Waag emphasized his interest in fresh air by pointing out the evening's title, "New Voices/New Faces/New Visions." (He also announced that his American Tap Dance Foundation had just signed a 10-year lease for a new studio and rehearsal space, after

### DANCE REVIEW

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almost 15 years without.)



ANDREA MOHIN/THE NEW YORK TIMES

Tap City Kazu Kumagai performed at this event at Symphony Space.

Yet if the mood felt different, many highlights came from familiar faces, like Jason Samuels Smith, who opened the show with a moody, introspective solo to Miles Davis. He returned for Doremshia Sumbry-Edwards's "Kennedy, LeTang & Manning." Set to music of the Benny Goodman Orchestra, this glamorous nod to bygone social dances like the lindy hop, choreographed for three couples, gave an all-too-brief taste of the smoldering, ever-smooth Ms. Sumbry-Edwards, a dancer of singular authority who moves in heels like no one else on the contemporary scene.

Michela Marino-Lerman, a rising, entrepreneurial-minded performer, offered the sultry "Tapsplottation," set to Curtis Mayfield and featuring tightly interlocking choreographic phrases. In "Pieces of Romaine" the eccentric Joseph Webb channeled Nas and rhymed while he tapped.

And, of course, there were numerous Michael Jackson tributes, reminders that many of Mr. Jackson's influences bubbled

from the same rich stream of black urban dance that has nourished tap for centuries. Michelle Dorrance teamed with the guitarist Darwin Deez to offer a tribute, singing a winsome love song before morphing into a series of intense, jackhammer rhythms. Kazu Kumagai and Derick K. Grant performed the touchingly intimate, sophisticated "Duet" to a live instrumental version of Mr. Jackson's "Human Nature," and the elegant Kendrick Jones evoked memories of the great tap dancer Jimmy Slyde with "Greatest Show on Earth," also in honor of the King of Pop.

The evening closed with Brenda Bufalino's ritualistic, martial "Haitian Fight Song," which has recently been deemed an American Masterpiece by the National Endowment for the Arts and was reconstructed by the New Tap Dance Orchestra. Ms. Bufalino, who performed a central role in the work on Friday, has long been outspoken on the need for innovation in tap, and it seemed fitting that one of her classic works would have the last word.