



Brian Brooks Moving Company: Worth Repeating
Everyday heroes in shining choreographic armor
by Deborah Jowitt
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If I told you that a man and a woman, shoulder to shoulder, sidestep to the right, hips swaying, to a throaty song by Peaches, walk back to where they began, and start over, adding rhythmic changes and larger gestures with every repeat, you might think: "Boorriing!" But if I told you that both members of this poker-faced chorus line are wearing only tiny, ruffled pink panties and pink feather boas and that, at one point, Weena Pauly steps along with Brian Brooks standing on her shoulders, you'd think again.

For the enthralling 10th-anniversary retrospective of Brooks's company (the last event in the 92nd Street Y Harkness Dance Festival), the Citigroup Theater's seating risers are folded back. This duet from the choreographer's 2002 *Dance-o-Matic* takes place in one of six bright-colored arenas, keyed to excerpts from five works. To catch the overlapping events, spectators must twist around on the inflated plastic chairs set between and around the mini-stages.

The circus ambience isn't too far-fetched. Brooks's brilliant escalating repetitions call for endurance, not to say heroism, on the part of the performers. After the "pink" scene, Brandin Steffensen, wearing a blue shirt and trousers, rotates on a bright blue square to taped percussion by John Stone; at first uneasily jerky as he bends forward and thrusts his arms out, he gradually loosens up—swinging his torso, gaining speed. In "10 Hands" from *Piñata* (2005), Brooks, Pauly, Jo-Anne Lee, Edward Rice, and Aaron Walter stand on a black floor, backed by a black curtain, wearing long black dresses and glittery little hats, and execute hand-and-arm patterns for the entire duration of that masterpiece of repetition, Ravel's *Boléro*. Sometimes their nimble hands and curving, shifting designs—now contrapuntal, now in unison—evoke swimming fish; I imagine, too, the pent-up women in Lorca's *The House of Bernarda Alba* going mad over their embroidery.

The speedy costume changes alone could exhaust a dancer, and several numbers, like the running-up-the-wall sequence from *Again Again* (2006), are especially arduous. Luckily, the premiere, *Happy Lucky Sun (Part 1)*, comes last. To a score by John Stroud with a pounding rock beat and enigmatic spoken sentences ("I was there in 1968 . . ."), the dancers, wearing Roxana Ramseur's layered gray outfits, hurtle around the central floor—now bright yellow. The main theme: One person dives onto another, who crumples backward, bringing them both to the floor. Maybe the catchers are already squatting; maybe they spiral down with their burden. Sometimes two catch one. But everyone's running and leaping at once, barely avoiding collisions, grunting and gasping. Smart, utterly unpretentious heroes, they make your eyes water and your spirit soar.