

Mon, Feb. 07, 2005

Varone serves buffet of rich dance

By PAUL HORSLEY The Kansas City Star

An evening of Doug Varone's choreography is a feast of tens of thousands of individual movements, from the intricate to the mundane, from the witty to the emotion-charged.

Saturday's Carlsen Center program of the New York-based Doug Varone and Dancers was so packed with content one could scarcely take it all in. It was at once exhilarating and exasperating — in short, an evening well spent.

Varone's movement ranges from frenetic outbursts to casual gestures like the twisting of heads. It is mostly abstract, with narrative strains. If at times one loses a sense of direction, at its best the work is wonderfully inventive.

Hippest of all was "As Natural as Breathing," a set of jazzy numbers in which the dancers jittered and jived, dressed in jolting retro colors.

Fantastic leg-twists and arm-whips mingled with bluesy slumps. The occasional unison came as a shock. Varone danced a whimsical solo, which began as a limber parody of his own shoulder-twitching style and ended as a sort of casting-couch in the bushes, with dancers of both sexes lying on his prone body.

The new piece was "Castles," commissioned by the Carlsen Center and set to orchestral waltzes by Prokofiev. It was a study in sexual conflict and attraction, in which "princes" felt compelled to dance with the women but seemed to prefer each other. The duet by John Beasant III and Daniel Charon conveyed friendship and desire with angular partnering and near-kisses.

Most compelling was "Deconstructing English," a virtual deconstruction of dance itself, set to an electronically garbled English Suite of Bach. Counterpoint was conveyed with delicious detail, by a sextet that seemed to be "trying out" a set of dense, riveting dances.

Frozen stances were punctuated by fluid arm curls, or by sudden "at eases" where dancers regrouped. Tiny foot-flutters, glances, spins — it all formed a bizarre gestalt.



File photo

"Inventive" best describes Doug Varone's choreography Saturday.

Doug Varone and Dancers Dance
Reviewed: Saturday, Feb. 5
Place: Carlsen Center