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DANCING ON THE WALLS

By Susan Reiter

After American Ballet Theatre packs away Cinderella's giant pumpkin and glistening slippers at the end of this week, Lincoln Center's stages—which have been overflowing with ballet for two months—will not host a dance company again until late in July. But starting July 10, an exceptional, alluring array of dancers will be in motion—albeit extremely slow motion—on three huge screens along the northern facade of the New York State Theater. As darkness falls, their enormous images will loom above the Lincoln Center Plaza as David Michalek's Slow Dancing premieres.

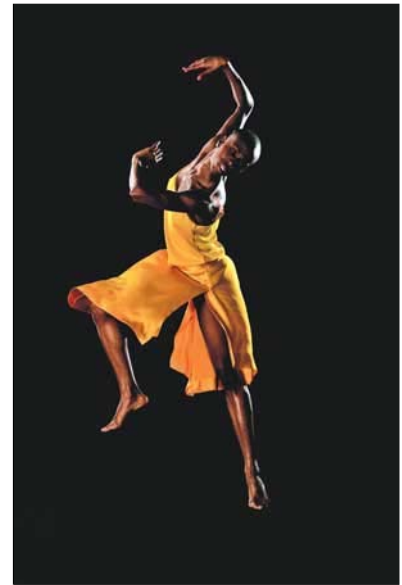
As you stroll across the open space of this cultural epicenter, gaze up and watch such luminaries as Desmond Richardson, Allegra Kent, Judith Jamison, Karole Armitage and Bill T. Jones perform a brief movement phrase at an extremely slowed-down pace that enables you to appreciate the intensity of muscular effort and refined technical details that the eye cannot appreciate when watching at normal speed.

Michalek's early work was in commercial photography, but he's broadened his artistic canvas to develop new, often multi-media approaches to portraiture, and went through considerable trial and error before locating a high-speed, high-definition camera that could achieve what he envisioned. He filmed the dancers—45 in all—at 1,000 frames-per-second, and in the finished footage their roughly five-second sequences are transformed into 10-minute movement meditations.

The amazing list of dancers includes many local favorites—Merce Cunningham's Holley Farmer, NYCB's Wendy Whelan, Martha Graham's Fang-Yi Sheu, Alvin Ailey's Dwana Smallwood, ABT's Herman Cornejo, former Paul Taylor dancer Patrick Corbin—as well as breakdancers, krumpers and exceptional artists from Japan, Indonesia and India. Michalek also enticed some who are now best known as choreographers—William Forsythe, Alexei Ratmansky, Elizabeth Streb—to come before his camera.

Inspired by the State Theater's architecture, Michalek envisioned—and a crack technical team has made possible—screens nestled into each of the three openings on the promenade level. Slow Dancing will offer an ever-shifting triptych of dancer images, programmed randomly so that one never knows who will be “dancing” side by side. It promises to offer a new and riveting way to experience the Lincoln Center Plaza and to appreciate with new awareness the fascinating potential of human movement.

July 10-29, Lincoln Center Plaza W. 66th St. at Broadway, 9pm-1am. Free.



Dancing in slow motion on the walls of Lincoln Center.

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