

SEPTEMBER 26, 1989

**DANCE**

# Under the Sky

BY DEBORAH JOWITT



Sara Pearson's *Ley Lines* in the studio

**SARA PEARSON, SUSAN MARSHALL AND COMPANY, BLUE EARTH BAND.** Pearson's *Ley Lines*, Marshall's *Interior With Seven Figures* (excerpts) and *Variations on Themes From Interior With Seven Figures*. Presented by Dancing in the Streets at Central Park's Bethesda Terrace, September 7 and 8.

**KAREN PEARLMAN AND RICHARD ALLEN.** *The Charlie Stories*. At the Whitney Museum of American Art at Equitable Center, September 5. Also at St. Mark's in-the-Bowery, November 9 through 12.

**BILL YOUNG AND DANCERS.** *RoughSix*. At the Whitney Museum of American Art at Equitable Center, September 12.

Outdoor performances can be a stringent test of your warm-season nerves, and there's always a chance that you won't see much of the performance you came to see—or that you'll see and hear and smell so much *besides* the performance that you'll feel confused and queasy. Still, I like braving open-air dance precisely *because* it blurs the boundary between art and living and, at best, expands your perception. It is, of course, distracting when, at one of Dancing in the Streets' September presentations, I'm sitting on the steps leading down to Be-

thesda Terrace watching the eight dancers in Sara Pearson's *Ley Lines* race and fall about in the elegant stone arcade leading to the fountain, and people on the park roadway above crane over trying to see what we're all looking at. But it's also interesting to view the horizontal traffic up there as a moving border for the intense and vivid dance that Pearson has made. And there are beauties that no theater could provide: the mysterious resonance of Andy Teirstein's score for strings, percussion, and bagpipes, as played by invisible musicians inside the stone tunnel; the long, narrow space that makes Patrick Widrig, momentarily alone at the end of it against a backdrop of darkening sky, seem far more enigmatic than he would in a theater. And when, as if on cue, the big fountain in the terrace suddenly glows with a peach-colored light that matches the dancers' red and orange and violet clothes (which match the red-edged purple paint on the walls), it seems like a flamboyant civic response to the rosy lighting Tony Giovannetti has placed within the arcade.

Pearson's *Ley Lines* is a fine and thoughtful example of a piece composed not just for the shape, but for the ambience of a space. The arcade retains vestiges of 19th century elegance: a walkway with a prospect of spraying water at one end, steps at the other. Once it was a wild place; now it's a grimy place and, since it's usually dark, a potentially dangerous one. In parts of Pearson's dance, when the dancers (Carlo Adinolfi, Heather Fenby, Susana Galilea, Tim Harling, Lisa Race, Evelyn Velez, Widrig, and Pearson) run into sudden stillness or crash into falls, they evoke contemporary urban wariness and violence without literal drama. Sometimes, when the music howls softly, they crawl over the pavement like midnight dogs. The occasional small solos are both private and ritualistic—I keep imagining them hallowing the place. The movement is simple and vigorous, but artfully arranged in terms of spatial design and counterpoint. *Ley lines* are the lines of energy that ancient Celts believed intrinsic to a place. I think Pearson found Bethesda's.

LOIS GREENFIELD