

The New York Times

November 22, 1990

Movements to Tease the Audience

By JACK ANDERSON

There was nothing wrong with the beginnings or the middles of the two dances Sara Pearson and Company performed on Sunday night at St. Mark's Church as an attraction of the church's Danspace Project. "Ley Lines" and "A Means of Support" started well and continued imaginatively.

"Ley Lines" took its title from an ancient Celtic phrase referring to lines of energy in the earth. Ms. Pearson's choreographic lines honored the church itself. Carlo Adinolfi, Heather Fenby, Susana Galilea, Lisa Race, Mary Sonntag, Patrik Widrig and Ms. Pearson swept in and out while a chamber ensemble played a resounding score by Andy Teirstein. And when Mr. Widrig ascended the stairs to where the altar would stand during a service, his action acknowledged that St. Mark's is both a dancing space and a house of worship.

For much of the time, "A Means of Support" teased the viewer's mind. It began with Ms. Pearson methodically setting books upright. She then toppled them. Was this a minimalist dance or a choreographic comedy of the absurd? No, because other dancers entered in elaborate passages of leaping and tumbling. Was this, then, an energy study? No again.

The parts of this work to a taped collage began to cohere when Ms. Pearson delivered a touching monologue about a woman patiently looking after a man afflicted with a debilitating illness. Later, dancers tried to put the books in order and Ms. Pearson, Ms. Race and Ms. Sonntag embraced tenderly. Still later, Tim Harling, Mr. Adinolfi and Mr. Widrig walked with sad resignation. But Ms. Pearson, no longer a stoic, screamed and trembled.

Although these scenes were poignant, Ms. Pearson devised so many different images of support, or the lack of it, that she crowded "A Means of Support" with almost too much to watch. And "Ley Lines" had a few false climaxes.

With these works, Ms. Pearson resembled a composer who, unable to conclude a symphony, keeps repeating chord after chord. But if she could not resolve her choreographic themes, she certainly knew how to introduce and develop them.