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DANCE

Distant Thunder

By Laura Jacobs

Sara Pearson & Company

Ley Lines and*A Means of Support*

At Danspace Project at St.

Mark's Church in-the-Bowery

November 15 through 18

Sara Pearson is not prominent in her dance *Ley Lines*. She gives that place to Patrik Widrig, whose one word, "hup," repeated throughout, is the work's ordering principle. The six other dancers heed it as a command to stop or go, but soon it seems less a command than an unrelenting meteorology—a change of light or shift in pressure.

Ley Lines was commissioned by Dancing in the Streets and premiered in Central Park in 1989. Leys are the lines of energy in the earth that the ancient Celts believed intrinsic to a place—and much of Pearson's dance is spent heart and hands to the ground, as if to lay pulse to pulse. Having moved indoors, into St. Mark's, the dance has lost none of its sense of rolling room and open air. There's a memory of the playground in *Ley Lines*, of group effort and shifting affinities, of empty fields lengthening in the distance. Andy Teirstein's music, ghostly bagpipes and tectonic drones, makes that distance a

dusky, mystical one.

Widrig is the most interesting mover in the group. Dark-haired, with a pale, angelic face (you can picture him in the robes and wings of Michael), he's compact and casual, concentrated yet touched with languor. His charisma lies in his contradictions. Widrig has an odd, untrained way with a *tour en l'air*: he corkscrews with his legs and arms akimbo and seems to dangle above the rest. He's happy in that dangling—almost self-satisfied.

The boundless, divining quality of *Ley Lines* infuses itself into *A Means of Support*, the evening's premiere, not just in the way the choreography fits loosely into the St. Mark's space, but in the dance's construction. *Support* is divided into sections, some of which are pure movement, some of which read like puns or parables. For instance, *Support* begins with Pearson on her knees, standing books domino-style in a snaky corral around the dance floor. She does this intently. Finally she tips

the last one and they all zip down—slowly, ponderously. Cut to Pearson, speaking as if she were on the phone, archly discussing the physical deterioration of a loved one. Meanwhile, downstage, Widrig is emptying the contents of a backpack, laying it all out neatly in a row: toiletry, pencils, papers, candy, and then, himself.

Stagy sequences like this are interwoven with dance: a man and a woman throwing themselves at each other in a Tharpian battle; a man (Carlo Adinolfi) who leaps and falls, all the time shouting "yes" and "of course," like some wild hermit-philosopher hopping amid the rocks outside his cave. And there's quiet, loose-jointed movement, the connecting tissue of *Support*. It doesn't all add up though. The dance remains distant from its own subject—helplessness and anger. It feels academic. This may be Pearson's choice, but I would like to see *Support* shortened and tightened. Right now, it's pins-and-needles numb—but without the tingling, the wretched nerve. ■