

## LULA WASHINGTON DANCE THEATRE

Attucks Theatre

March 18, Norfolk, Virginia

Hello, I'm Edgar Loessin with loessin at Large. This small group of dancers is big in talent. They obviously have classical training but they also perform with wide ranging individual freedom of expression and innovation. Each person is a dynamo of energy, energy that at times seems frantic and out of control.

The first part of the program is a suite of three solos and a dance by the full ensemble choreographed by Donald McKayle. This work displays the outstanding athleticism and histrionic abilities of the company, as danced by Djuan Watts, Mica Moch, Melvin Clark and Khilea Douglas the third.

Keisha L. Clarke, an astonishingly lithe, long limbed statuesque beauty stops the show with "Angelitos Negros".

Lula Washington choreographed the second set of dances which pay homage to the civil rights movement. Parts of the work are danced to Martin Luther King's landmark speeches. This device does not work for me. When perfection is attained in a work of art, or in Dr. King's case, as a great orator, no embellishments are needed, they distract and dilute. The choreography seemed obvious and redundant. By contrast, the next piece, "We Wore the Mask" manages to encompass many emotions with piercing clarity and is both ironically humorous and hauntingly powerful in dramatic intent.

The highlight of the second act is a tribute to Katherine Dunham danced with authenticity and amusing charm by Perris McCracken, Hanniyah Muhammad and Tamica Washington-Miller.

Although I found some of the choreography repetitious, the joyful spirit and the deep dedication one senses in the dancers, emerges and triumphs over all.

If you missed them in Norfolk, all is not lost. The Virginia Arts Festival is presenting the company at the fabulous Ferguson Center in Newport News on May 24th.

This is Edgar Loessin with Loessin at Large and I'll see you at the next opening.