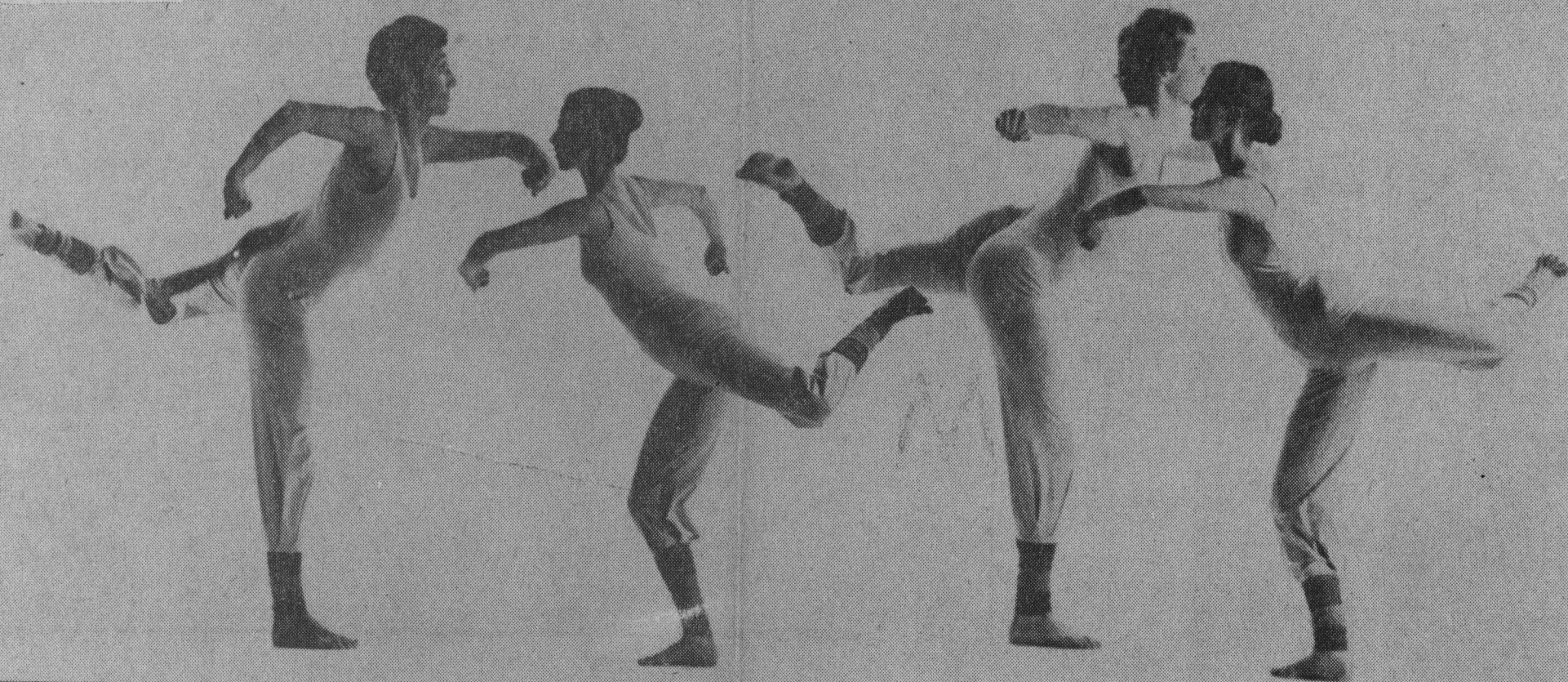


Tandy Beal Co.
in "Stravinsky
Miniatures"



'Hovering, As If Freed From Gravity'

By RICK CHATENEVER
Sentinel Staff Writer

TANDY BEAL leans forward in her chair, eyes aglow, long brown hair cascading over her shoulders. She's frazzled. Just back from performances in Marysville, first stop of her company's eighth annual winter-spring tour which will bring them to Cabrillo Feb. 17-21 and then to New York, North Carolina, Texas and back to San Francisco in months to come. Touring — you know how that is.

She's got travel plans and budget problems and a hundred little details on her mind, and you know how that is. And she's got two brand new works bouncing around inside her head, on the brink of bursting, full-grown, onto the stage. You know how it is.

She doesn't look frazzled. She looks radiant, as always.

Since the last time we saw Tandy, she's been to Europe on a teaching-concert tour which took her to London, Zurich and Aix-En-Provence.

The European tour was "the agony and the ecstasy," she says with a laugh. She lived in France, teaching in French for four months. Her debut on the Continent brought raves from the foreign press. "Hovering, as if freed from gravity," is the translation of the review in the Zurich paper.

"One of the French reviews said I had seduced them with dancing," she recalls. "That's almost what you have to do. A fresh audience is so much more . . . (she leans back, arms crossed, a picture of skeptical judgment.) They wait — I have to work so hard . . ."

The European reviews are on file now, along with those from

New York to Los Angeles suggesting, among other things, that this Santa Cruz-based artist "may prove the most brilliant young dancer/choreographer working on the West Coast."

But for all of the recognition and praise from the critics elsewhere, Tandy says her bonds to Santa Cruz, and to her home and studio in the mountains above Felton are stronger than ever.

"The more I travel, the more I feel the strength of being home," says the dancer who is also on the dance faculties at Cabrillo and UCSC.

"There is a certain amount of difficulty to being a contemporary dance company outside a major city — but I feel I couldn't be doing this anywhere else. I feel a real connection with the community — I have taught over 2,000 students here. . ."

She pauses. "That's kind of amazing," she says. There's a kind of delight in the way she says it.

Tandy Beal and Company — featuring her longtime partner Ron Taylor, new dancers Kathleen McClintock and Wade Madsen, composer and co-artistic director Jon Scoville and lighting designer Evan Parker — will perform an expanded repertoire of new works and traditional favorites in their home season performances at Cabrillo next week.

As is her custom, Tandy will launch the series with a special benefit performance Feb. 17 at 7:30 for supporters of the company. The benefit, to be followed by a champagne reception at a private home in Aptos, has traditionally been a highlight of the Cabrillo engagement. It features Tandy introducing and talking about the works on the program with the same supple grace, articulation

and engaging humor she brings to choreographing and dancing them. More information on the benefit performance is available by calling 429-1324.

(More information on the rest of the Cabrillo performances, traditionally sell-out events, can be had by calling 425-6331 or 688-6466.)

When she dances in the Cabrillo Theater Tandy senses "a real warmth" coming from the audience. "There's a very strong sensation of how many people out there have helped."

She contrasts this reaction, and others she has gotten across the U.S., with attitudes she encountered abroad, especially in France.

"There's pressure in the U.S. to make your work entertaining," she explains. "There's pressure in Europe to make your work exploratory. They may go overboard about application of the novel, or the unusual."

She refers to pressures on the avant-garde "to be belligerent about what they're doing . . . instead of just investigating the realms of the human spirit."

Art, she says, "can either bring about more mystery or more understanding . . . and I'm not sure which is a better goal."

She will share her own current explorations of the human spirit at Cabrillo in two new works — "Fontanelle," which she says is the word for the soft spot in a baby's head, and "Au de la," described as "a moment in seven acts."

Actually Tandy says she's "happy when people don't know the title — it means they don't look for anything."

Both of the new works are theater pieces. They're very

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different, she says. Each has a life of its own.

"Theatrical works are probably my home base," she observes. "I have done a lot of dancing pieces — but that is to be sure I get them out while I still have my legs."

Ironically, while the terms "dancer" and "choreographer" are often linked with a hyphen following Tandy's name, the words actually indicate very different regions of her artistic awareness.

"The theatrical pieces deal more in visual images — there's more of an interior Rorschach to them," she explains. "It's not that there is a specific message, and I usually don't know what the piece is about when I start. But when it's finished it provides a place that everyone can drop into — and bring their own life to."

The dance pieces in contrast, "have to do more with just beauty — with kinetic motion, timing and space. As a choreographer I'm only interested in new works — as a dancer I'm only interested in old works. They're like old friends or lovers; you dance them totally without cerebral thought.

"A choreographer starts with the interior and works outward; a dancer works the other way. But as a dancer, when you've really danced right, when you have been present and have been very conscious, it's like a blessing."

That "blessing" is something she shares with her audiences and she observes, "when you do something well and you know they know what you've done, it's wonderful . . . it's astonishing. But you have no idea who's out there, so you do your best under any circumstances."

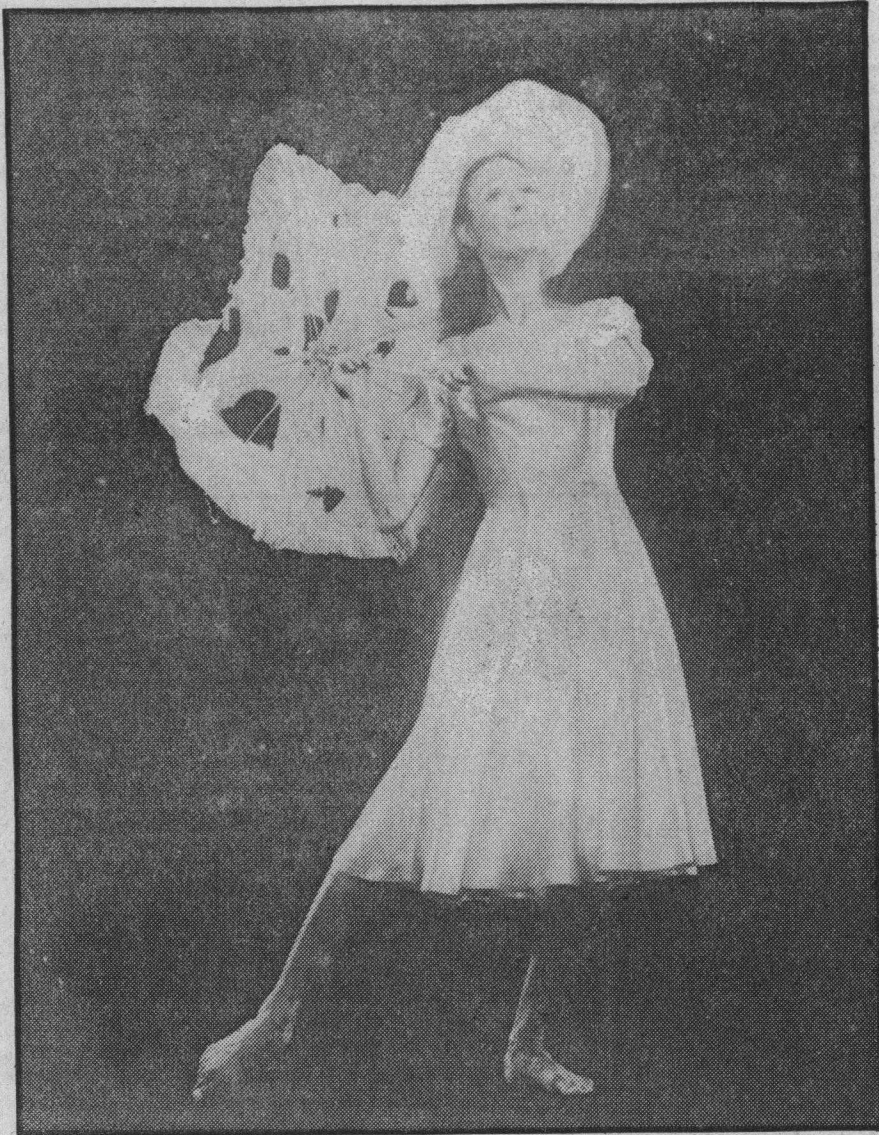
Of course there's also a gap that can't always be surmounted between the performer and the audience. Sometimes there is little recognition of what a piece is attempting to do. Other times, "the praise part doesn't really compute."

At those times the dancer is left alone with her dance.

"Dancing is the place where I can get back to center," concludes Tandy Beal. "It's the place where I can arrive back at myself and I'm not in the way. It's a place of harmony, even if you're struggling to make it work. The sheer curiosity of how a piece is coming together overwhelms the other daily issues.

"That's probably what keeps me in the profession," she says.

That, and the blessings:



Tandy Beal in "The Pink Lady"