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Sentinel

Beal, Tandy

Typical Tandy Beal — Lively And Graceful

By RICK CHATENEVER

Sentinel Staff Writer

Tandy Beal talked about physics and metaphysics, "Mysterious Barricades" and "Raids On The Inarticulate," "the Big Self and the little self" in the Cabrillo Theater Wednesday night. Then she put her microphone down and demonstrated what she meant.

Dance Review

The occasion was the benefit concert which opened the home season series for Tandy Beal and Company, Santa Cruz' premier modern dance troupe now gaining increasing attention in national and international circles. The performances continue tonight through Sunday at 8, with a Sunday matinee beginning at 2.

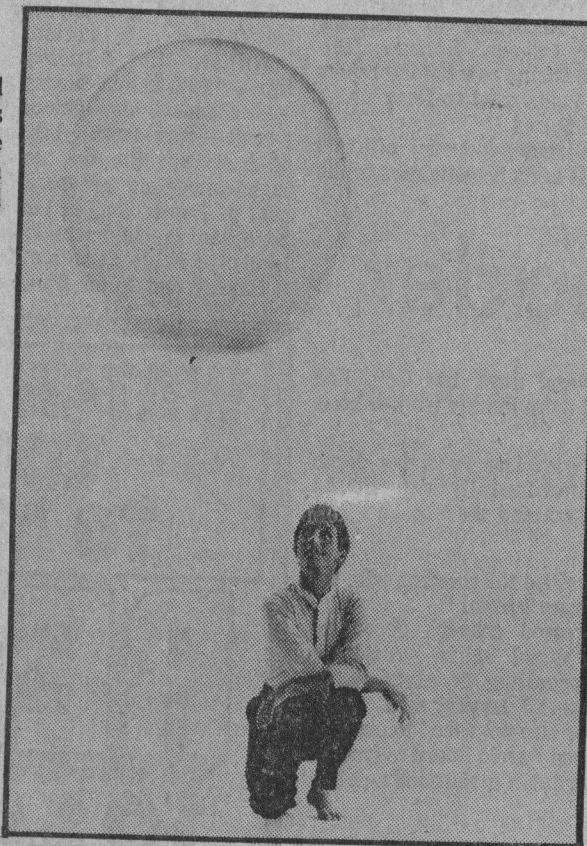
The benefit event was typical Tandy — lively and graceful in both word and movement, bringing measures of beauty and humor to the stage and illuminating in the process, what it means to choreograph and to dance. Highlighted by the local premiere of her newest work "Fontanelle," the concert combined fluid movement with explorations of the psyche, bridging the space between dancer and audience with threads of identification.

Wondering aloud whether the purpose of art is to "bring about more mystery . . . or more understanding?" Tandy, along with fellow dancers Ron Taylor, Kathleen McClintock and Wade Madsen did some of each in the fast-moving performance set to music mostly by the company's co-artistic director John Scoville.

Scoville's contribution — especially in the haunting, vital and soaring electronic score for "Fontanelle" — was obviously part of a collaborative process with the choreographer, and his musical achievements were as exciting — and as lovely — as hers in movement.

While the concert was long on old works — many of which had been seen many times before at Cabrillo — the new company exuded a sense of maturity and professional polish as subtle as lighting designer Evan Parker's precise touch illuminating the large white balloon that provided a partner for Ron Taylor in the gravity defying piece "Heisenberg's Principle."

Taylor, Tandy's partner for more than 10 years, danced with assurance, tempering strength with incredible lightness. His solo from "Desert Voices" was an especially powerful movement piece, capturing the essence of "a half-man half-Pan" figure and extending the illusion to turn the space around him into a naturalistic environment teeming with life.



Ron Taylor in "Heisenberg's Principle"

New troupe members McClintock and Madsen danced "Travelogue," originally choreographed by Beal for herself and Taylor. The personalities of the two new dancers, both accomplished performers in their own rights, added a new dimension to ongoing flow — sometimes in unison, sometimes separately — of the piece.

Tandy's own style as a dancer was evident in her

comically nervous and mimelike solo from "Mysterious Barricades" and the Spanish rhythmmed "Bailar," done with a red rose in her hair. As a performer she seemed to be backing away from demanding physicality in favor of more theatrical, often delightfully comic, images.

The fact Tandy's choreography has been evolving into more theatrical realms was especially evident in "Fontanelle," which concluded the program. Just as the earlier duet pieces had treated the dancers as two sides of the same self rather than as distinctly individual personalities, so this one involved all four dancers in explorations of their shared psyche, and their own individual histories.

With striking props and effects — notably the one that ends the piece — that take your breath away, "Fontanelle" applied its choreography, along with spoken interludes, photographic props and Scoville's contemporary but Gregorian chant-sounding electronic score to its theatrical and psychological concerns. The result is a provocative, spell-binding creation which manages the remarkable task of unlocking psychological regions for its performers and audience rather than making a more dogmatic statement.

"Fontanelle" — the title means, "the soft spot in a baby's head" — manages to take its' creator's probings into regions both metaphysical and inter-as and turn them into striking, original art.

With its images that lingered after the curtain closed, the work shone with extra radiance as the other smaller gems that had come before