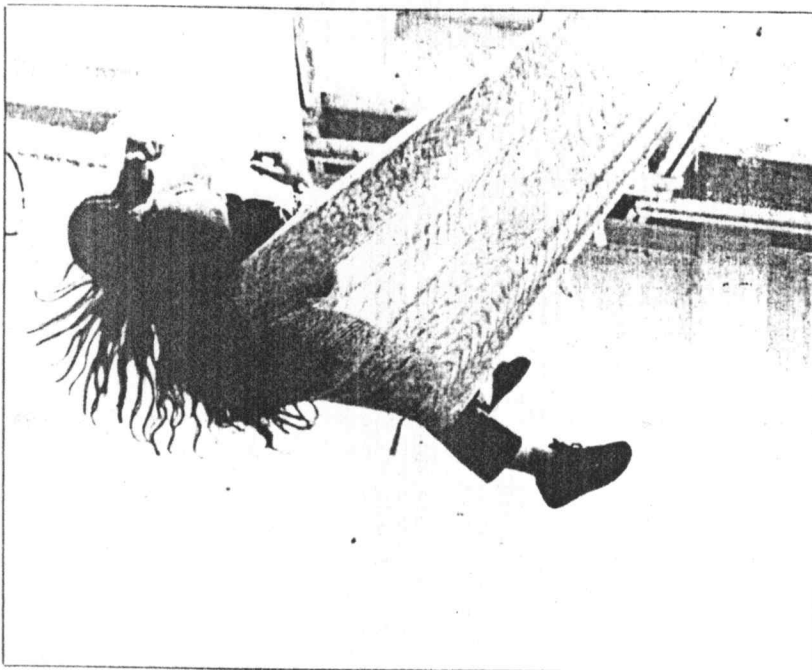


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DANCE NEWS & NOTES

JODY LEADER



Ultima Vez's "Always the Same Lies" will debut at Occidental College's Keck Theater tonight.

Dancer savors the unexpected

He's being touted as the Flemish avant-garde dance wunderkind, a 28-year-old choreographer-photographer-director who likes near-misses, fleeting criticism and the hesitation of horses.

Wim Vandekeybus and his eight-member company Ultima Vez, will begin their third U.S. tour tonight at Occidental College's Keck Theater in Eagle Rock. For its Los Angeles debut, the company will present the American premiere of "Always the Same Lies."

It's a continuation of his first three works, dance-theater pieces flooded with passionate movement, physical risk and associative power.

"What the Body Does Not Remember" startled audiences in 1987 with brick throwing and semi-erotic frisking. "The Messengers of Bad News" (1989) found dancers hurling on and off stacked platforms and "The Weight Of A Hand" (1990) included an on-stage confrontation between dancers and musicians. The first two pieces won New York's Bessie Award, the dance equivalent of the Oscar.

Born and raised in northern Belgium, Vandekeybus grew up on a farm (his father was a veterinarian) and drove horses eight hours a day for 15 years. In interviews, he has expressed a fascination with "that particular moment when the horse abruptly avoids an obstacle."

His dances are full of such unexpected activity and emotional intensity. "Always The Same Lies" is based, in part, on the reflections of his close friend Carlos

Wegener, an 88-year-old former singer and dancer and widower who lives in a small, dirty apartment.

Vandekeybus visits him frequently. On one occasion, he suggested Wegener clean up the floor, because the accumulated dirt was bothering his allergies.

"In the night we found the wooden floor," said the choreographer. "Carlos said, 'I have nothing to look at now.' He brought out flowered dresses belonging to his late wife and spread them on the floor. 'Now I have something to look at.'"

Approximately 400 dresses, sewn together, make up a carpet for "Always," which is later raised as a backdrop.

"His view of life is a rebellion against the acceptance of being old," Vandekeybus said. "We exchange a lot of ideas and views on things. It's very connected to the Earth, not to art."

Vandekeybus is involved in a half-dozen projects. He's simultaneously working on three different dance theater works and planning one involving horses on stage. He's collaborating on a feature film based on one of these "plays."

"I never studied dance or theater formally," Vandekeybus said. "I research my own movement. I don't want to kill the naive. I like to work from a very personal viewpoint. I want to have a direct impact on the dancers and the audience."

"Always The Same Lies" will be presented tonight and Saturday at Occidental College. Curtain is at 8. Tickets: (213) 466-1767.