



**Remembering Beauty
with
Anemone Dance Theater**



photo by Avi Behar

by June Julian on May 16, 2003

You may think that anemones are underwater dancers, plantlike animals, translucently quivering to the touch of the tides. But they also move among us in our Code Orange city nowadays, and dance this town around quite a bit.

From the first time I saw Anemone Dance Theatre perform their *Moving Water Theory* at the Puffin Room last fall, I knew these were extraordinarily gifted dancers. At the Evolving Arts Theatre in early May, they premiered *remember?* at Just Move, the anniversary concert for Dance Space, celebrating the downtown center's nineteen years of service to the dance community.

In *remember?* Sara Baird, choreographer and Anemone's co-founder, is Odysseus' sea siren, mesmerizing us with her spell of pure beauty. For a delicious interlude, she and Erin Dudley, move

with undulating projections and a hypnotic sound score, to carry each of us to a personal place of luminous vitality and freedom.

Beginning as tight huddled packages on the stage, they slowly emerge, like a chrysalis, or an unfurling fern, darkly silhouetted against Lee Whittier's lusciously patterned video backdrops. Christopher Tignor's soundscape embraces their primal metamorphosis from confinement to glorious expansion. First, one big leaf-like headpiece appears, then the other, as the dancers couple and uncouple to create giant plants with their bodies in the pulsating deep green light.

For blessed moments, we gratefully forget death and destruction in the desert, and drink in the cool lushness of our evolutionary journey from the dark wet mud to the sun - our toes as roots, our trunks strong and supple, our heads as verdant haloes in the dappled light. We remember.

Sara speaks about trying to embody life force in the dance medium and Lee tells us of working with the idea of the "expanded moment". Both describe their collaboration method as the mutual fine crafting a strong idea. They say that remember? is very much a work in progress, and like the images of growth and change that it evokes, it is also continues to evolve.

In her famous book, *What is Art For?*, Ellen Dissanayake tells us that all humans have a basic biological need for beauty in their lives. Although notions of beauty may be culturally determined, the urge to seek it and embrace it is very real. *Anemone's remember?* is a wonderful offering of the beauty we crave, now when we need it the most.

- at the Dance Space Center, New York, NY, May 3, 2003