

*THE BOSTON PHOENIX - MONDAY, AUGUST 20, 2001**In Collaboration with Mark Morris Dance Group***By LLOYD SCHWARTZ**

MY ANNUAL PILGRIMAGE to Jacob's Pillow for the Mark Morris Dance Group (why wait till next March to see it in Boston?) brought an unexpected reward. Boston pianist Donald Berman was filling in for Morris music director Ethan Iverson for the weekend. Berman's virtuosity, sensitivity, and sense of humor in the pieces he played in were vivid demonstrations of why Morris wants live musical accompaniment. Berman made the perfect dance partner. In Morris's ominously titled but utterly delicious "Canonic 3/4 Studies" - a compilation of some dozen fiendishly difficult waltzes by "various composers" (Morris, most musical of contemporary choreographers, admits he himself doesn't know all the composers, though Moszkowski and Czerny are among them) arranged by Harriet Cavalli to accompany Morris

rehearsals - Berman's hilariously extended rubatos, bouncing octaves, and spinning trills seemed to lift the dancers off the stage (sometimes in the opposite direction Morris leads you to expect), make them jump, twirl them around. He managed to sound simultaneously like a great virtuoso and a rehearsal pianist. In Morris's blockbuster finale, "Grand Duo," the brilliant young New York violinist Lisa Lee joined Berman for Lou Harrison's exhilarating ritual musical workout (would we ever hear Harrison on the East Coast if it weren't for Morris?) - with Berman as one-man gamelan.

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