

## Rita Mae comes to Portland

by Pat Scott

From reading the body of work she's produced, knowing her life story, from photographs on book jackets, from magazines and newspaper articles, one forms a certain blurred vision. Even in her personal look and carriage, however, Rita Mae busts stereotypes — one of her main avocations of life, one suspects.

Rita Mae Brown came into the KBOO radio station for an on-the-air interview, arriving early. One expects to see "handsome," but beautiful is more to the point. One expects to see "amazon," but diminutive, perhaps 5'4", is the reality. One expects "strong," and during the interview the voice is strong, the ideas as well, but Rita Mae's small feet are decorated by fragile-strapped high heels, her lips colored with red lipstick. Surprising, too, that, although very much a Southern writer and advocate for her South, her accent is slight (not a "South Carolina drawl," I'm told).

Less surprising, I suppose, was the citizen response, at least among the women of KBOO, and myself. "Fawning" is not entirely appropriate an image, but it's not far off the mark, either. Luckily, Rita Mae is a gracious queen for she could easily take too much advantage of her court.

It's obvious Rita Mae Brown enjoys herself. Working turns her on. Ideas and plans for future work spill out so fast, for those of us hanging on her every word, it's hard to comprehend one before she's on to another. And after over ten years at this (her first book published in 1973), she is a pro — polished, yet warm. She seems the only one unruffled by the squeeze of her schedule in Portland.

Rita Mae touts the South as well as her



books. She is no longer a feminist writer, or a lesbian writer, she is a Southern writer. In a 1982 *People* magazine article, she claimed, "Most of the writers come from south of the Mason-Dixon line. We throw them like litters down there. You Yankees are too busy making money." She is fiercely loyal, and not much enamored of the North.

It's been said that Rita Mae Brown is an elitist. I can't tell you. She seemed to say all the right things here, even to making an impassioned plea on the air for support for "our brothers," men with AIDS.

Because she has been since the beginning an openly lesbian writer, yet has achieved celebrity status in this repressive society of ours, Rita Mae said of herself, "I am a miracle!" The sentence hung in the air, a little tarnished with egocentricity perhaps, and disturbing, but the truth of it was undeniable. That Rita Mae Brown has made it and made it big; that she has not been gunned down by some fanatic; that, given her background, she made anything of herself at all — these are all miracles. And to those of us ushering her in, that Rita Mae Brown was actually in our midst was also a miracle.

(Watch the pages of *Just Out* in the coming months for an interview with Rita Mae Brown.)

## Echoes

by Sandra de Helen

The Do Jump Dance Company is unique in its use of trapeze, dance, movement and martial arts to create an experience to remember. In their current run, called "Echoes" at the Echo Theatre, Do Jump remembers and recreates portions of their

### • DANCE

first two shows, "In Case of the Future" and "Creatures."

Choreographer/director Robin Lane has pulled out her best pieces from both shows and combined them so the concepts from the first half create a base for the second half. The selections from "Creatures" epitomize the beauty, the wildness, the simplicity and the fun of the other inhabitants of our world. The costumes, lighting and music enhance the dancers' movements throughout the evening, never more (nor less!) than the opening number where the dancers hang from the ceiling so batlike that they're mesmerizing.

In "Dawn, the Monkeys," the first dancer visible is Robin herself, lowering herself a millimeter per second with such physical control it's nearly impossible to be certain whether she's moving or whether somehow it's the rest of the world that's moving. This piece has been completely re-choreographed for this performance, and it is beautiful. By the end of the number, members of the audience are bouncing in their seats, aching to join in the fun with the rest of the monkeys.

I'm convinced "Cat of Prey" is in the show because Janesa Kruse does it so well. I've watched dozens of National Geographic specials and they always show cats in the wild

sleeping (most of the time), stalking and eating about once every 3 or 4 days, and grooming each other upon occasion. Janesa is the only cat of prey I've ever seen act so angry for no apparent reason. But, she does do it well.

"The Herd" and "The Bug" round out the first half. Both numbers are audience favorites, perhaps because they make people laugh.

"In Case of the Future" is a nightmarish vision of a world in which we're threatened by the crowds, the isolation within those crowds, the punks, the crazies and the very air we breathe. Five years have passed since its first performance and somehow the punks and crazies don't seem as threatening. That's balanced by the miracle that we're still breathing at all what with Union Carbide et al. So the piece lives.

"The Robots" are more robotic than the originals and therefore more chilling.

Robin's "Solo" is more powerful this time because Robin is more controlled, more centered. She exudes calm, serenity and hope. Her costume for this show is very different from all the other costumes which is symbolic of a new and different life arising from the aches of the old.

This year's ending is new and different, too, but I'm not sure I like it as well. In 1981 the show ended with a duet by Robin and Janesa. It ended with hope and love, as expressed by two women. The current ending has a young, androgynous child walking through the futuristic terrain. To me this says, "Our children are our future." Well, yes. But everybody says that. I'm accustomed to Robin Lane saying something unique.

In any case, it's a fabulous show. The dancers (all women) are excellent, the music, all original compositions by Obo Addy, Barbara Bernstein, Kiera O'Hara, Bev Standish and Billy Wyatt. The musicians are live, and all technical aspects look and sound professional.



"Lady" Lisa Lyon

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