

arts/entertainment

Dancer expresses himself with movement

By Penelope Smith

The room was depressing him and he had to get out. Murray Louis, one of the world's foremost modern dance choreographers, a *Daily Nebraskan* photographer and a reporter piled into a little red two-seater MG and went off to Barrymore's to discuss life.

Louis is one of those rare individuals who can verbalize his physical eloquence with both humanity and humanism. He spoke softly and graciously of not only dance, but his view on the politics of "irrational men" and his art collection in his Long Island home.

Barrymore's pleased him; he spread his hands and looking up at the flyspace he said, "I love this place, backstage is my home. It makes me wonder what all these people are doing in my home. The stage is my ceremonial ground where I celebrate—it's the last great ceremonial ground."

Louis has always wanted to express himself in movement.

"Dance is not what I've always wanted but what I always was and always did. When I was a kid not a day went by that I didn't see the world through my feet and my body, not just my eyes."

LOUIS BEGAN dancing professionally at 22 after he had served in the Navy during World War II.

"I had seen people die, seen people killed—it made me realize that it was such a short life and that I should do what I wanted to do," he said.

Murray Louis founded the Murray Louis Dance Company in 1953. At the same time he was the lead soloist for his close friend and longtime associate Alwin Nikolais, another modern dance choreographer associated with the avant-garde movement in dance during the 50s and 60s. The two have worked together since, not only as choreographers but as teachers in the internationally famous Nikolais-Louis Dance School in New York where the Louis and Nikolais companies are both based.

Because of their long time association there has always been some question as to the influence Mr. Nikolais has had on Louis' choreography. Louis stressed that his approach and his results are different.

"Nik's thinking about dance is one of a theatrician's, my thinking about dance is that of a dancer. He incorporates the multiple parts that go into theater, sound, movement, light, color. He generally sits out, he can watch all the manipulation in front of him and can direct it.

"I **DISCOVER** and make my insights through dance on the stage itself, through being in it. My sensory receptors, the manner in which I select movement all come from direct experience of the movement. Being a dancer I know what I'm doing from the inside, so one might say Nik's approach is more objective. Mine is more subjective. When one sees Nik's work one sees the compound called Theater, one sees my work more directly as movement as motion."

Louis says that there is little carryover in his work from Nikolais with the exception of music and lighting.



Photo by Mark Billingsley

Murray Louis, modern dance choreographer, will perform with his dance company at Kimball Hall Friday and Saturday at 8 p.m.

"If I can get the best electronic music and lighting why not get them—and they both come from him," he said.

Nikolais originally was Louis' teacher but he said they became colleagues shortly. Asked if he ever had any problems being under a shadow Louis said, "No, I create a pretty good shadow myself."

Louis says that he will place no limitations on the contents of his work nor is it necessary that it relate to human emotions.

"I think when one speaks of humanity one is being a little indulgent, a little permissive with themselves. This is perfectly alright, one feels that they like to be the center of the universe, everything, like the sun, revolves around them. I'm inclined to feel that way too because the universe is a pretty large orbit to hold up but my playground is what rests within all things, what rests within matter."

LOUIS SAID that he wants the audience to experience an enrichment and a revelation through his work.

"I look for a more personal participation from students, dancers and audience. I want an audience to know who and what they really are and what the Dance is about from having it operate on their senses. I want the audience's neurological system to vicariously experience what's occurring on stage called kinetics."

For Louis, emotion as a driving force and subject for his dancing and choreography has no meaning without a directing force.

"To limit anything to emotion is again to be permissive. One shortchanges oneself and becomes indulgent. The great heroes of the theater have never really been emotional. They come to their roles instead with great passion.

"**PASSION IS** an energy. It is the strength and conviction one brings to any of the emotions—it can turn that emotion into either heroic or piddle. Passion is the strength of a Lady MacBeth doing what she did or a street corner brawl—one is heedless or one draws forth a great inner reservoir. If this intensity does not exist then everything operates on a very surface entertainment level. To represent the depths of experience you need the energy of passion to dig."

Louis' choreography stems not only from inside him but from what is happening on the street.

"It's all one and the same. How one lives in his environment how one walks through space, how one holds one's head in a dimension of upward, how one brings into the body an autumn experience, how one touches things—there is no way of divorcing an individual from his environment. An artist, particularly a dance artist, spans this because the instrument with which he makes his art is also the instrument which he uses in his daily living."

Louis said that this unity between self and environment is illustrated in two of the pieces that will be performed at Kimball this Friday and Saturday night.

"**'CONTIMUUN'** and **'Figura'** both have very different points of view but both are insights into the human condition. The Dancers, not as individuals withdrawn with self-vision but as participants in the environment in which I have placed them, create a distraction with a very communicable premise that allows one to get to the essence rather than be caught up with personal extrania.

"Everything has an essence and I would imagine that eventually come out a universal essence. There will always be universals as long as we all share the same neurological system. To all human beings on this earth, and I've toured all over it, I speak the same message everywhere because we all share that same basic equipment for reception and perception."

Asked where he is going now that the avant-garde movement is considered passe, Louis said, "Forerunners often go blindly. You never knew what your next step was, whether it was safe or where it was leading you, I'm not blind anymore. Now I'm taking my art into an eloquence and a richness with a conviction of abstraction and the skill and maturity to manifest it."

Irish turmoil

During the Christmas holidays of 1971-72 Marcel Ophuls spent six weeks in Northern Ireland filming interviews with Catholics, Protestants and members of the British Army concerning their attitudes towards the war currently raging in that region. Interviews with such political leaders as Terence Marne O'Neill, former Prime Minister of Northern Ireland; radical Bernadette Devlin, and Ian Paisley, an IRA Provisional as well as local leaders are incorporated with newsreel clips of everyday bombings and riots. This montage of the ongoing war between the Catholics and Protestants is called *A Sense of Loss*.

A Sense of Loss will be shown at the Sheldon Film Theatre, 12th and R Streets, Sunday at 3, 7 and 9 p.m. and Monday at 7 and 9 p.m. This film is sponsored by the UPC Foreign Film Series and admission at the door is \$2.50.



Photo courtesy of Cinema 5

A scene from *A Sense of Loss*, a film exploring the war in Northern Ireland.