

## Lila York

By **Tobi Tobias**

Veteran Paul Taylor dancers often take to choreography as their careers evolve. The most popular of the Taylor brood just now is David Parsons, who has his own company; the finest by far is **Lila York**, a widely employed freelance dance-maker whose work is, lamentably, not often seen in New York. However, her signature piece, *Rapture*, created in 1995 for the Juilliard Dance Ensemble (the performing group of the celebrated dance academy), was the highlight of the present students' recent concert -- which also included a self-consciously arty piece by Parsons.

*Rapture* (set to parts of two Prokofiev piano concertos) vividly reflects the situation of young adults about to leave the shelter of their nurturers and embark upon life as custodians of their own fate. The dance first displays them bursting with talent, daredevil skill, and optimism -- greeting with sheer ebullience the miracle of being alive. A second section reveals the co-existing, or at least threatening, dark shadows: the melancholy and defeating experiences that will sober them all and destroy the least resilient among them. The concluding movement returns the survivors to irrepressible joy, but not before showing them richer and more serenely confident for the experience of their trials. York manages all this, mind you, simply by suggestion and without preaching.

Her choreographic technique is wonderfully able. York knows how to calibrate her movement vocabulary, how to keep her stage picture compelling, how to work solo or paired figures against large, spontaneous-looking ensemble formations, how to establish mood without lapsing into portentousness or sentimentality. Equally significant, her work has the impact of the authentic. The choreography appears to spring from genuinely felt real-life circumstances and emotions, not (as in many a contemporary effort) a highfalutin, self-conscious gloss on them, resonating with Significance. *Rapture* possesses an ecstatic energy in its allegro passages and an understanding and acceptance of life's struggles in its adagio section that reach the viewer unmediated by any kind of conceptual fanciness. Such professional acumen joined to such truly depicted feeling is to be cherished all the more because the combination is rare on the dance stage today.