

Movies

'M.M.': All the Bright Moves

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Devotees of both independent filmmaking and dance have a modest but impressive treat in store at the Hirshhorn Museum tonight and tomorrow night, in the free showing of "M.M. in Motion," a 46-minute film about French dancer-choreographer Mathilde Monnier. The filmmaker, Vivian Ostrovsky, is an American who lives in Paris; her works have been shown at the Berlin, London and Jerusalem film festivals and are also included in the permanent collections of the Centre Georges Pompidou and the Videotheque de Paris.

Ostrovsky has been an enthusiast of Monnier's dance creations since 1986, when she saw her in action at the Avignon Festival. "M.M. in Motion" was four years in the making and draws upon Ostrovsky's filming of six Monnier choreographies (dating from '88 to '91), in rehearsal and performance.

The key feature of the film is that it attempts to translate into cinematic terms the very essence and style of Monnier's dances. Hence the film—episodic, fragmentary, impressionistic—captures the defining traits of a choreographer's *modus operandi*. The resultant product is illuminating in ways that more conventional documentaries scarcely can hope to be, providing a sense of the creative process that is truer to real life.

Ostrovsky manipulates every aspect of film imagery—there are sequences in black-and-white, in color, in sepia tones, some slowed to *adagio*, some speeded up to frantic frenzy—in a largely successful attempt to fuse film and choreographic aesthetics. Rehears-

al sequences are intercut with performance footage. The choreographer's thoughts are sometimes expressed explicitly, in directions to the dancers, and sometimes implied, as when we glimpse Monnier working through an incomplete passage on her own body, trying this, trying that, questing for the ideal embodiment of her concept. Along the way, one also gets a sense of the distinctly French approach to contemporary choreography, much beholden to American models but very much its own in its emphasis on histrionics, dramatic contrasts and anatomical extremes.

The film will be shown twice at the Hirshhorn, at 8 tonight and tomorrow night. Ostrovsky will be present for the showing tomorrow, to discuss her work and answer audience questions.