

•The winter 1976 **Boston Ballet Choreographers' Series** proved again to be the best idea extant for dancers, choreographers and audiences let in on the process of experimentation. Allowing for discovery is an expensive commodity for a ballet company in union-scale dancer hours, theater rental and production costs. Chance is a luxury and, in current fiscal times, is usually written out of the budget.

The availability of the dreary National Theatre (still not renovated as promised), a component of the Boston Center for the Arts, made the series possible. The National has good sightlines and acoustics and a stage suitable for small-scale ballets, but its chief advantage is low rental. Heat is problematical; peeling paint and broken concrete aisles confront hardy ballet fans.

The Boston Ballet invited six choreographers from outside the company, Ze'eva Cohen, Martha Armstrong Gray, Helen Heineman, Saeko Ichinohe, Charles Neal and Frank Ohman, to join ballet master Lorenzo Monreal and resident choreographer Ron Cunningham in creating new pieces for the series.

The January pace was rather breathless, with most of the company double- and triple-cast in the schedule. The helter-skelter feeling carried over into programing, with choices made for expediency rather than purposefully. With three different programs over twelve performances, how else to account for the two "all-white" ballets (by Heineman and Ohman) presented on the same night and Neal's tasteless sex number, "Yin and Yang" being shown at the Sunday "family matinee"?

Out of ten new works presented I count three home runs, two hits with five strike-outs, not a bad average for a series. It will be interesting to match my scorecard with that of E. Virginia Williams for invitation into the company's permanent repertoire.

Best, first: a toss-up among Cohen's "Goat Dance," Gray's "Flowering Into New Battles" and Monreal's "Classical Symphony."

"Goat Dance" is a trip for the dancers into a new land, not only a physical journey into the middle-eastern environment, but a new exploration of rhythm, characterization and motivation. The piece is in five parts, the first for the wild man (Tony Catanzaro), a shepherd so close to nature that he is more governed by its laws than the laws of mortals. Four men echo his movement but not his free style. When the women enter, the mood changes abruptly, no longer open but constrained. The lovely material for the women's dance is overshadowed by the presence of the men. The final section is a solo for the maiden (Stephanie Moy or Elaine Bauer) before she is caught in the mores of society, with a suggestion at the end of her affinity to the man of the wild. There is a sense of ritual to the work; its repetitions seem to be brought about by life patterns rather than choreographic construction. The music by George Crumb and from Iran and Greece is a welcome change, allowing for a new sound without a step-by-step dependency on the beat.