

Culturally broadening, surprisingly enjoyable

Flamenco dancing like Polynesian food

Flamenco dancing is like Polynesian food: one would never think to seek it out, but when confronted with it one finds it not only culturally broadening but surprisingly enjoyable.

Such a response depends, of course, on the quality of the performance. The Luis Rivera Dance Company, which performed Thursday in Memorial Hall, is often good; when attention is centered on Rivera himself, the experience of watching a skilled technician and innovative artist is vivid indeed.

Haughty and stony-eyed, Rivera prances about the stage with the bold grace of a Lippizan stallion. He alone of the dancers in his troupe seems to be totally possessed by the music, completely in harmony with its rhythm and tone.

Exuding the lithe confidence to the point of arrogance one intuitively expects from a Spanish dancer, he kicks his way through the

merry "Aires de Cadiz" to the lush balletic intermezzo from the opera *Goyescas* without apparent effort and with considerable

dance

by Lawrence Toppman

The Luis Rivera Spanish Dance Company

bravura. Even during such a gross conceptual *faux pas* as "Solo en el Siglo XXI" ("Only in the 21st century"), in which a seminude Rivera paces through a complex flamenco step while writhing with a leather strap to the

thrashings of Steppenwolf's "The Pusher," the man makes one aware that he is frequently capable of creating something lovely but always capable of creating, of using his imagination to arouse or amuse.

His wit is responsible for a medley ironically titled "Typically Spanish," a hodgepodge of hoary Andalusian melodies — "Lady of Spain," "Granada" and "El Relicario" — that serves as a comic backdrop for physical burlesque by Rivera and his two female partners, who share gleefully in the posing and pratfalls.

Unfortunately, the rest of the company rarely equals Rivera in raw talent or spirit. Lilitana Ramirez, whose swarthy beauty is neatly set off by her resplendent yellow and orange costumes, is a facile comedienne. But she seems unsure of herself and too aware of her broad-heeled shoes, and her uneasiness communicates itself to the audience in her

more serious moments.

Her partner, special guest star Maria Alba, is more flamboyant and fully in control of her body, particularly her noble head and patrician, slim-fingered hands. She handles her scarves and fans delicately but swirls them with swift precision, while Rivera snaps the ubiquitous castanets to create a frenzied beat. Yet she too looks preoccupied with the routine of the dance and tries unsuccessfully to disguise her distraction as a deep reverie.

Part of the blame for the dancers' hesitation to commit themselves lies in the guitar work of Juan Amaya. Amaya is a competent accompanist and a powerful guitarist able to extract every possible effect from both the box and strings of his instrument, as he proves in his solos.

But his work in support of the dancers lacks luster. The driving, forceful impulse

which the guitar must provide for flamenco music to stimulate both performers and audience is rarely present.

Baritone Manolo Munoz deserves equivalent censure for his monotonic vocal contribution. Dividing his time evenly between notes he can't hold and grating, incoherent cries, Munoz spits out unintelligible fragments of meaningless Spanish ("For the lie . . . It is done . . . How are you so?").

His squawks were complemented unpleasantly by those of Memorial Hall's sound system. The recorded orchestral numbers crackled and hissed incessantly, simultaneously reminding one that part of what was taking place on stage was "canned" (read "phony") and obscuring the elegance and sweep of the rich Spanish music.

But the focus of the show, and the best thing about it, is Rivera. He is on stage two-thirds of the time, and even when he is moving in an ensemble one's gaze flows naturally toward him.

For flamenco dancing is neither compelling nor moving unless it is consistently performed with style and craft. Luis Rivera has those qualities in abundance, and they infuse his art with a true Sevillian fire.



Flamenco dancer Luis Rivera

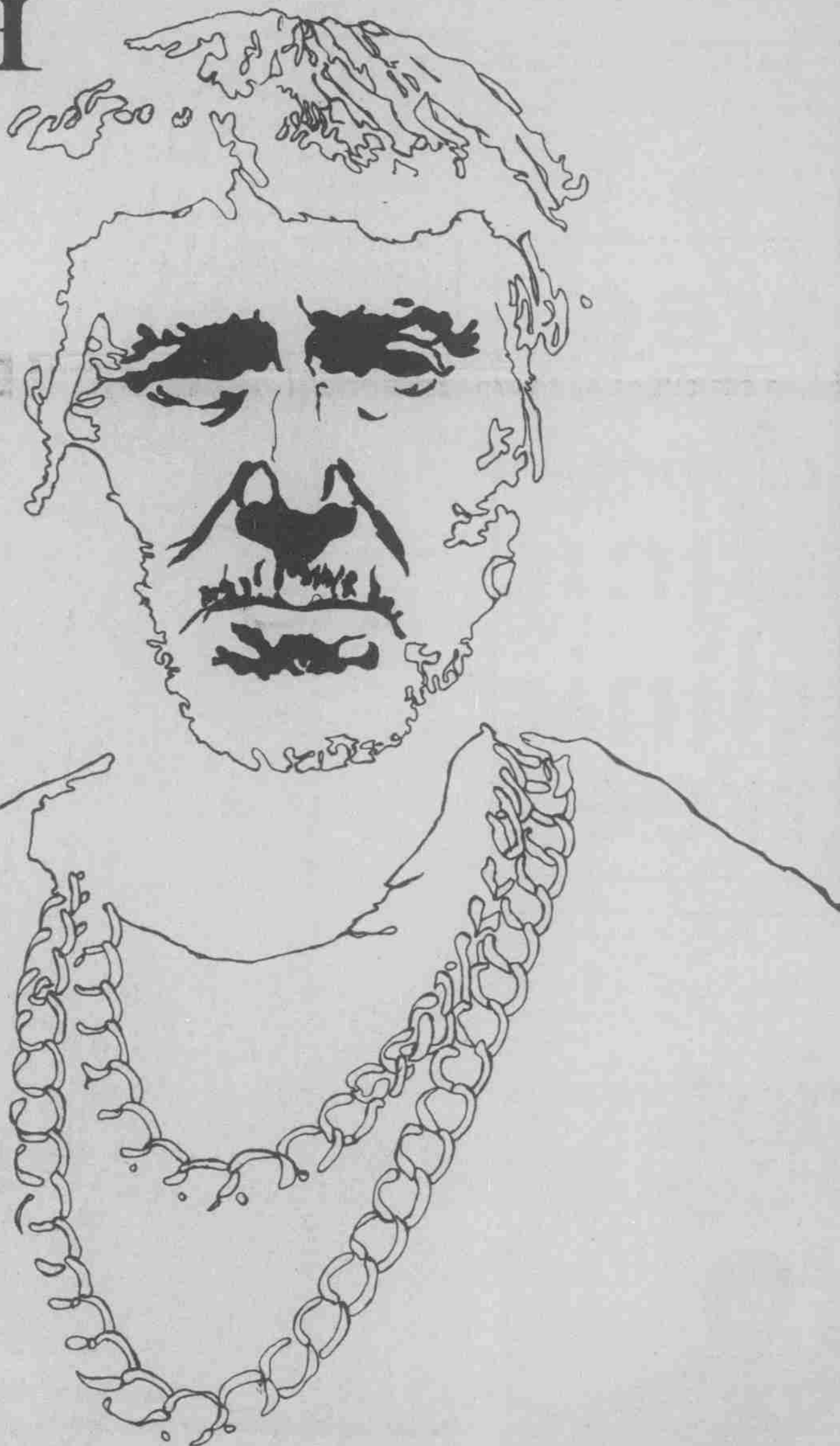
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'Exorcist' actress speaks in Memorial Hall Nov. 10

Oscar Award-winner Ellen Burstyn will give a lecture presentation including film clips from her movies, a discussion of dramatic roles and dialogue with the audience at 8 p.m. Nov. 10 in Memorial Hall.

Burstyn, also winner of the Tony Award for Best Actress, received the Oscar for her title role in *Alice Doesn't Live Here Anymore*. She has been nominated for two Academy Awards for her portrayal of Lois Farrow in *The Last Picture Show* and the distraught mother in *The Exorcist*.

Her other movie credits include *Goodbye Charlie*, *For Those Who Think Young*, *Tropic of Cancer*, *Alex in Wonderland* and *Harry and Tonto*.

Tickets, available at the Union desk, are \$1.

On Nov. 11, poet and former prisoner B.F. Maiz will talk about his poetry, drug addiction, the ghetto and prisons at 8 p.m. in Memorial Hall. Maiz was sentenced to 13 years in prison for violation of federal narcotics laws. He has written over 1,000 poems, all of which he has committed to memory. His program, "May I Poet With You?", is free.

Maiz kicks off a week-long symposium on prisons and the corrections system, sponsored by the Union Current Affairs Committee.

A panel of penal administrators, professors and psychologists will discuss prison problems at 8 p.m. Nov. 13 in rooms 207-209 of the Union. A panel discussion on inmates and society will be held at 8 p.m. Nov. 18 in rooms 207-209 of the Union, and one on women's prisons is planned for 8 p.m. Nov. 19 in rooms 202-204 of the Union.

Prisoners' arts and crafts will be on display in the North Gallery of the Union Nov. 11-21.

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