

THIS WEEKEND

A BIRD '77

New pieces



Photo by Sabine von Laker

Participating in 'Shebang' tonight and tomorrow night in Stockbridge are these reflective dancers, shown here with more than one mirror. At left on the left side is

Jane Goodrich, back to Goodrich is Bettina Montano, facing them is Dawn Lane. Back to camera and reflected at the top of the photo is Michelle Duffin.

Dance from all sides

By Jeffrey Borak
Berkshire Eagle Staff

THEY'RE having a "Shebang" at the Sportsmen's Club in Stockbridge this weekend, but it's not the kind of affair you might expect at a place devoted to socializing and marksmanship.

This "Shebang" is a dance concert featuring four new pieces by Stockbridge choreographer Dawn Lane — "Message in a Bottle: Autobiography," a solo for Lane and nearly 80 Dawn dishwashing-liquid bottles; "To Be Continued," featuring 20 Berkshire County mothers and daughters ranging in

age from 5 to 80; "4 x 4," a quartet for Lane and dancers Jane Goodrich, Michelle Duffin and Bettina Montano; and the concluding piece, "The Whole Shebang," which features the full complement of performers in bits and pieces from each of the preceding works on the program.

Performances are scheduled for tonight and tomorrow at 8 at the club, on Route 102.

The concert — Lane's first full evening of new pieces in five years — is the result of Lane's interest in issues relating to who is a dancer, who gets to perform, where and why.

Lane has come to believe that dance is a

participatory activity, available to anyone who wants to take the plunge. That's why, for example, she chose the Sportsmen's Club as the venue for this concert. It's centrally located and it's not associated with the arts.

"It's not a conventional space," Lane said by telephone from the club, during a break in her hectic rehearsal.

Seating won't be conventional either. The audience will be seated on all four sides of a rectangle. Everyone, she says, will have a front-row seat. The dances are designed to

DANCE, continued on D4

Dance is much harder to find in the fall, winter and spring.

Koussevitzky Arts Center at Berkshire Community College, space at Williams, North Adams State and Simon's Rock colleges, and the Consolati Performing Arts Center at Mount Everett Regional, there are plenty of good places to see dance. Booking those places is

another matter.

In the early fall and late spring, when the potential audience increases, those spaces are often booked by other performing groups and artists. In the dead of winter, when people are bored and looking for something to do, the uncertainty of the weather puts a damper on planning.

"It's difficult to spend all that time and money and effort for a performance that might have to be canceled because of bad weather," Lane says.

Money also is a problem, one that will get worse, Lane says. Outbacks in federal and state arts agencies and increased pressure

on private sources mean that grants are going to be harder to get. As a result, Lane says, artists are going to have to move in different directions.

"It's a question of how you can make work, involve an audience, pay your bills, pay your dancers, and feel you want to make more work," Lane said.

"We're problem-solvers. We're going to have to seek out or invent ways to integrate ourselves into different areas of the community. We're going to have to find ways, to use the resources around us. It's not just going to be about making evenings of performances anymore."

Dance from D1

be seen from all four sides. "I think it will be as interesting for us to perform in that space as it will be for audiences to watch. My hope is that this will engage the audience, make our work approachable and understood."

Lane describes "Message in a Bottle" as a whimsical, somewhat autobiographical piece. "4 x 4," she says, is an exercise in movement. "It's neither story nor commentary," Lane said. "It feels like we architected the piece."

The thematic heart of the evening may well reside in "To Be Continued."

The 20 women in the piece are, essentially, non-dancers. Some of them are women Lane met at a series of Jacob's Pillow-sponsored community dance programs at Mount Everett Regional School in Sheffield. Some she met for the first time at their first rehearsal.

Lane's own grandmother and mother are in the piece, although Lane is not. "For me, this was a chance to pull myself out and really watch and direct."

"I wanted to choose a group of people who had some kind of connection, some substance from which I can build material and they can feel comfortable."

"To Be Continued" is very task-oriented, Lane says, "very every day. My hope is that people will look at this piece and feel they can participate."

"My job, after getting curious about the concept, is to have a sense of what I can ask [her performers] to do. I have to get to know who these people are. Once I know that, it sets up a whole range of possibilities, as well as limitations."

Lane grew up in Levittown on Long Island and in the Berkshires. She studied art in Boston and then came back to the Berkshires in 1984. She's lived here ever since. She's also been making dance here ever since.

Like so many of the choreographers and dancers who live and work in the Berkshires, Lane earns a living outside dance. She has taught in public school and at Williams College, Simon's Rock and Berkshire Community College. She supports her work as an independent choreographer now by working at a women's clothing store in Great Barrington and in a restaurant.

"In terms of this performance," she said, "I feel very embraced by the Berkshires. I've done a lot of fundraising for this concert and I come into performance week without being in debt."

Dance flourishes in the Berkshires during the summer, largely because of Jacob's Pillow. Dance is much harder to find in the fall, winter and spring. It's not for lack of venues, Lane says. Between the