

ENTERTAINMENT

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Area choreographer Dawn Lane gives audience a whole 'Shebang'

By Jeffrey Borak
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STOCKBRIDGE — At the end of "Message in a Bottle/Autobiography," the opening work in "Shebang," an engaging, frequently whimsical evening of captivating, free-spirited new dance works by Dawn Lane performed over the weekend at the Stockbridge Sportsmen's Club, dancer Laurie MacLeod comes out in the half light and begins piling the 80 or so empty Dawn dishwashing liquid bottles that are part of the piece into the center of the blanket she trails behind her. Her task done, MacLeod folds the ends of the blanket into a bundle and runs off stage.

When Lane makes her final appearance of the evening nearly 60 minutes later, it is from a bundle that has been dragged on stage and left in the middle of a gathering of dancers and non-dancers. She rises from the blanket, the empty dishwashing liquid bottles at her feet, and scans the faces arrayed around her, uncertain at first. Then, finding reassurance here, she slowly settles to the floor, becoming part of the community that surrounds her. It is as if she has come home.

"Shebang" may have the look of

an evening of individual dance works but it is Lane's journey to this point, this community of people who dance and make movement, that links those pieces, giving the program the texture of a single work made up of four sections.

The evening is artfully constructed. It begins with Lane cautiously making her way across the spacious rectangular dance space, her face lit by a candle, and ending in a nurturing group of women.

The opening work, "Message in a Bottle/Autobiography," finds Lane interacting in a variety of ways with a series of empty Dawn dishwashing liquid bottles that have been grouped in various patterns around the dance floor.

To a cool, hip acappella rendition of "The Star-Spangled Banner" and songs by Frankie Valle and Aretha Franklin, Lane tiptoes over and around the bottles; secures them to her fingertips; separates them in precise rows, then knocks them over; blows another row of bottles down in dominolike fashion.

Order becomes disorder; precise patterns are disrupted, as though she were juggling the various as-

Dance Review

pects of who she is, what she does; challenging what she knows; attempting to find answers, create something new out of something familiar and proscribed.

In the evening's centerpiece, "To Be Continued" — the title works on a variety of levels — Lane introduces us to several generations of women, none of them trained dancers, dressed in varieties of black and white.

To the strains of Rossini's playful overture to "The Barber of Seville," ordinary people performing ordinary tasks become extraordinary figures involved in extraordinary life rituals. Walking, cradling an infant, sleeping, waking up, playing games take on new resonance and texture.

The mood throughout is efficient, at times playful and free-spirited. There is a sense of common purpose and spirit. Life's routines become a kind of game in which roles sometimes get reversed — daughters are mothered by mothers, mothers are mothered by daughters. People, sitting or

lying on blankets, are whirled and dragged across the floor. The whole affair ends in a series of playful tugs-of-war whose participants wind up tangled and bound in one big knot at the center of the room.

The gathering of generations is replaced in the next work, "4 x 4," by four trained dancers — Lane, Jane Goodrich, Michelle Duffin and Bettina Montano — who are sent spinning through a series of exuberant, yet precise, movements.

The dance is marked by sharp angular movements and long, sweeping runs that take full advantage of the airy rectangular performing space. The feeling throughout is one of liberation and expansiveness.

Patterns repeat themselves, often at slower tempi. A series of sharply defined, crisply executed lifts later becomes a series of graceful displacements executed at a tempo that is about half that of the accompanying music.

Without a break in music, this relatively short, soaring work seamlessly segues into "The Whole Shebang," as each of Lane's trained dancers leads a group of women from "To Be Continued" back into the arena.

Dancers and non-dancers freely mix. There is no distinction between them. Images from the preceding works are recalled as, gradually, the performers are drawn to the center of the room where, seated on blankets, almost campfire style, they form the circle that will surround, enfold and welcome Lane.

As Lane finally becomes one with the people around her, it becomes clear that a journey begun 60 minutes earlier in little more than candlelight has, in fuller, warmer light, found its destination.