

DANCE

REVIEW

Whimsical fable proves unerasable after all

By LEWIS SEGAL
Times Staff Writer

Starting with its title, everything about "Erase-E(x)" seems intimidating, but at bottom this hourlong presentation by a Brussels-based company named Joji Inc is a whimsical fable: a story ballet for postmoderns based on an intriguing premise drawn from art history.

In 1953, the brash young Robert Rauschenberg erased a drawing by Willem de Kooning, putting his own name on the result and raising all sorts of questions about creation, destruction and the impermanence of just about everything.

These questions are newly pertinent at a time when the Taliban and terrorists on U.S. soil have erased monuments and when a hurricane has nearly erased a whole city.

What's left behind in the rubble to evoke our memories of what's lost? And how do those memories deepen our sense of irreversible change?

At REDCAT on Wednesday, performers Johanne Saunier and Charles François focused on these issues by proposing to erase a solo by Belgian choreographer Anne Teresa de Keersmaecker — to wipe it out, paint it over. De Keersmaecker's swoopy, loose-limbed contemporary workout for Saunier teemed with distinctive tasks: rolling across the floor with momentary rises onto her arms, for one. We would see them again, after erasure.

New apparel, lighting, accompaniments and décor soon turned up, helping Saunier immerse herself in intense, contorted explosions of action and feeling: dance drama courtesy of the New York theater collective

the Wooster Group. Underscoring this were excerpts from the soundtrack of the 1963 Jean-Luc Godard film "Contempt," helping us understand unstated premises of the evening.

Recycled over and over, the "Contempt" sound bites suggested that fragmentation and repetition were perhaps more central to "Erase-(E)x" than erasure itself. And sure enough, when the Wooster Group's drama vanished in a new free-form De Keersmaecker section — danced by Saunier to Indian percussion (Umayalpuram Sivaraman) and an American country ballad (Dolly Parton's "Jolene") — we recognized old motifs and met some that were new.

One looked like lounging at the beach: Saunier reclining comfortably face down, leaning on her arms with her legs raised behind her. Another involved her bouncing along on her behind. They all returned in the final section, a fast, talky Saunier-François duet created by actress Isabella Soupert to a collage of music from four sources.

Essentially a suite of dances that achieved a family resemblance through shared nuggets of motion, "Erase-E(x)" highlighted not only Saunier's versatility and stamina but the impossibility of its own stated mission.

You can erase a drawing: It's a vulnerable physical object, like a

'Erase-E(x)'

Where: REDCAT at Walt Disney Concert Hall, 2nd and Hope streets, downtown L.A.

When: 8:30 tonight through Sunday

Price: \$20 to \$32

Contact: (213) 237-2800 or www.redcat.org

monument or a city. But nobody knows better than Saunier and François that you can't erase a dance, something that exists only in energy, time and memory — and in this case, something they're performing all week long at REDCAT.

If you really could erase a dance, you could erase anything else that exists in energy, time and memory: painful or unsavory moments in your own past, for example. Fat chance. Time itself erases dances, but Joji Inc helps preserve them by encouraging us to look closely and remember everything we see.

That's how dances stay alive after the curtain calls, so any fiction about erasure that heightens our recall can be considered an act of creation: definitely the front part of the pencil, not the rubber tip at the end.

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