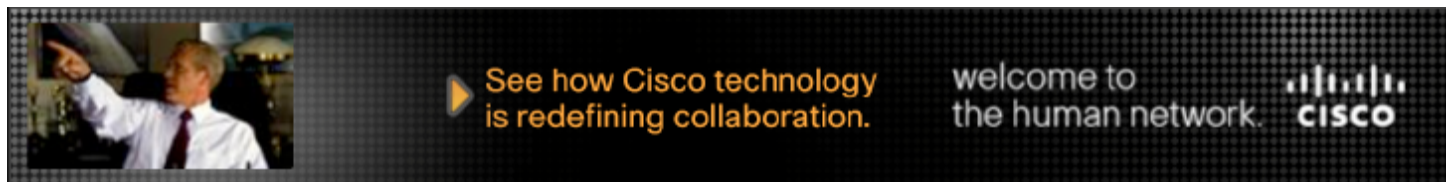


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DANCE REVIEW | 'NOMAD: THE RIVER'

A Girlhood in the Shadows of the Cultural Revolution

By [JACK ANDERSON](#)

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Dancers move through a dream and try to escape a nightmare in "Nomad: The River," which Yin Mei presented on Wednesday night at Dance Theater Workshop. Ms. Yin, a Chinese-born choreographer, grew up during Mao's Cultural Revolution (1966-76), and "Nomad" is a haunting evocation of her feelings about that era's political hysteria.

The piece begins with a taped reading of excerpts from a diary Ms. Yin kept at the time. The recitations abound with fanatical slogans. But the choreography that follows the reading proceeds with a meditative calm. Gaye Atay, Sonja Kostich, Pedro Osorio and Ms. Yin appear to be on a visionary spiritual quest enhanced by the production's setting and electronic score, both by Christopher Salter.

People come dimly into view and fade away as they move in Lea Xiao's atmospheric lighting through what appears to be a forest of translucent fiberglass panels.

Many of the musical sounds are delicate. Others are not. Outbursts of what sound like gunshots ring out. Dancers run in panic. Throughout the work, which lasts about an hour, there are sudden juxtapositions of calm and disruption, as if Ms. Yin were choreographically demonstrating how terrible memories can produce nightmares.



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There are flurries of nervous gestures. Dancers roll up in pieces of sheet metal as if entombing themselves. Freed from these tombs, they shake the metal and create thundering noises. At one point, their steps forward suggest that they are wading in a river, perhaps a stream of purification; at another, Mr. Osorio smears his legs and those of the women with bloodlike red paint. The production ends with repetitions of the revolutionary slogans.

"Nomad" poignantly acknowledges that although forgetting a painful past may be impossible, art may be one way of coming to terms with it.

"Nomad: The River" will be performed again tonight at 7:30 at Dance Theater Workshop, 219 West 19th Street, Chelsea, (212) 924-0077.

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