

### DANCE REVIEW

# Light steps

Trisha Brown's dances are infused with a sense of mischief

By Robert Johnson  
STAR-LEDGER STAFF

ANNANDALE-ON-HUDSON, N.Y. — Summer is playtime, so why not romp with choreographer Trisha Brown? Kicking off a four-day stand at Bard College's Richard B. Fisher Center for the Performing Arts, Thursday, her company offered a buoyant program infused with wit. If any dance event is worth a quick run out of town, it's this one.

Brown's humor is on the dry side. Her troupe has not survived 40 years by pandering to the high-fructose crowd. Instead, its appeal has to do with postmodern austerity and conceptual daring. Still, Brown lightens the tone with mischief, making it easy to believe that it was she, and not architect Frank Gehry, who rumbled the steel panels on the Fisher center's notoriously tousled rooftop.

The evening opens with a duet

from "Twelve Ton Rose," the title punning on the 12-tone rows employed by serial composers. Imagine being naughty to a score by Anton Webern! Dancing in a large panel of light, two men are red slashes occasionally stepping off this plane to tarry on the dim border. They bound and dodge, moving in and out of synchrony, but, as the title suggests, "Twelve Ton Rose" also concerns itself with weight. When Brown turns the dial on her gravity machine, the dance becomes gluey.

"Foray Forêt" is even more of a tease. Although the ensemble scatters across the stage, the space looks empty. No music interrupts the performers as they mill around, falling and catching one another. They might be dancing on a desolate plateau. In the purpling background, a burst of light suggests the aurora borealis. But wait, what's that sound trickling into the theater? Could it be a brass band?

Now Brown has us by the ear. That faint, brassy thumping in the distance is impossible to ignore. The mind follows it as the invisible band travels from one side of the theater to the other, growing louder when the door to the lobby opens. And now the dancers are taunting us, leaning backward into the wings at an impossible angle, hiding from us but stretching to plant one foot on the stage. "Foray Forêt" is not exactly vaudeville, but Brown has daubed it with greasepaint.

Another duet, "You Can See Us,"

seems almost too cutesy, riffing on an earlier dance in which Brown performed with her back to the audience. This time the duet partners frame the stage, one facing us and the other hiding her features.

Inspired by a bubbly Rameau opera in the glorious "L'Amour au théâtre," Brown explores larger symmetries and circles, and virtuosic partnering for pairs and teams of dancers. Although the dancers seem relaxed, bodies go flying. Like acrobats, they follow the swinging impetus of the movement overhead and around a partner's shoulders. The dancing can be right-side up or upside down, and the ease with which the company meets Brown's tumbling challenges has an air of gallantry. There's even a hunting party, though nothing as crass as the one in Mark Morris' "L'Allegro."

Clearly Brown loves the theater, and what a pleasure it is to share those moments when this refined artist indulges in whimsy.

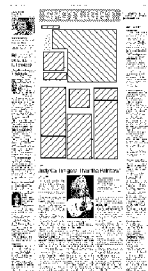
*Robert Johnson may be reached at [rjohnson@starledger.com](mailto:rjohnson@starledger.com).*

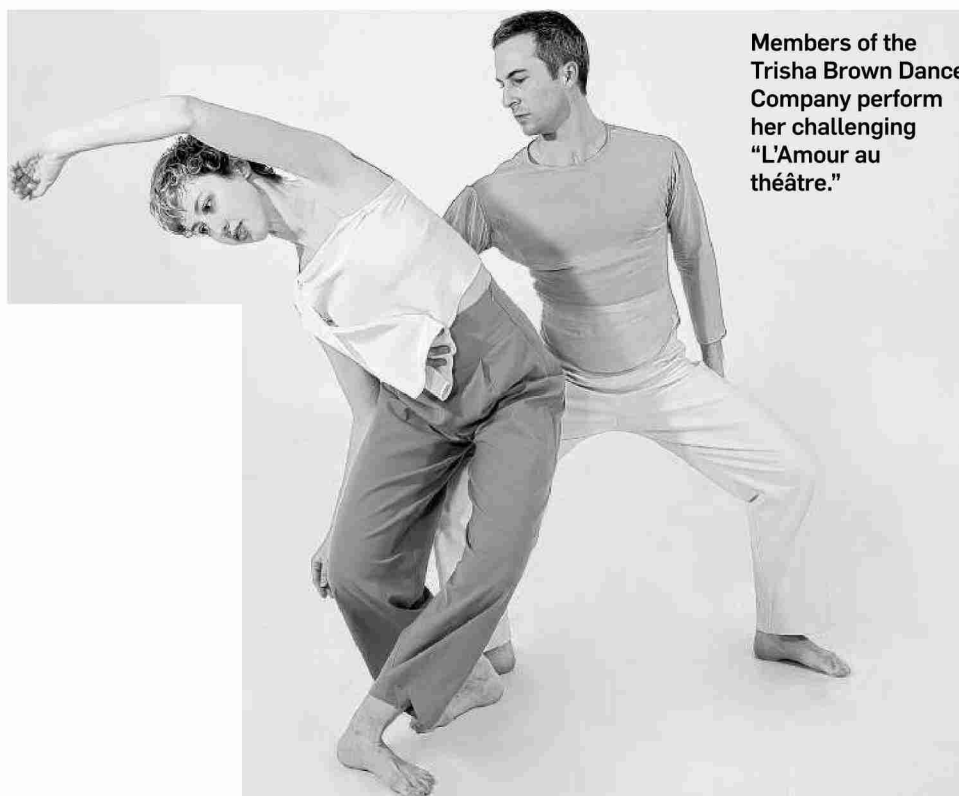
### Trisha Brown Dance Company

**Where:** Richard B. Fisher Center  
for the Performing Arts,  
Annandale-on-Hudson, N.Y.

**When:** Tonight at 8,  
tomorrow at 3 p.m.

**How much:** \$25 to \$55.  
Call (845) 758-7900 or visit  
[fishercenter.bard.edu](http://fishercenter.bard.edu).





Members of the  
Trisha Brown Dance  
Company perform  
her challenging  
"L'Amour au  
théâtre."