

THE PLAIN DEALER

(Cleveland, OH)

May 24, 2001

Telling the story of Serbia's pain

By WILMA SALISBURY
PLAIN DEALER DANCE CRITIC

New York dancer-choreographer Valerie Green was steeped in Serbian culture during her childhood in Broadview Heights. She participated in folk dances at St. Sava Serbian Church and learned traditional ceremonies from her mother, a former dancer who was born in Belgrade and performed with national companies there. As an antidote to pigeon toes, Green also took ballet, tap and jazz at a local studio.

After earning a degree in modern dance at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, she moved to New York as a scholarship student at the Erick Hawkins School of Dance. In 1998, she founded her own company, Valerie Green/Dance Entropy.

This weekend, she comes home to perform her intense dance-theater piece, "Homeland — Inner Side," at St. Sava Serbian Orthodox Cathedral of Cleveland. The evening-length work makes a personal statement about ordinary people whose lives were changed by war in the former Yugoslavia.

"I started it several years ago," Green said by phone from New York. "I went to Belgrade to visit family. The people there had witnessed their homeland being divided up and left in pieces. There was a sadness that people didn't know how to understand. There was a lot of anger.

"I made this piece for people to learn and for myself to heal."

To create a sense of place for the production, Green begins with scenes from old travel films. "It's historical stuff. Everybody's happy. There's togetherness. Then, it slowly breaks down," she said. "The dancing communicates the emotion."

Green developed the dance vocabulary from elements of East European folk dance and gestural movements that came out of a workshop she led last summer in Belgrade.

"I was invited to stay for a whole month," she said. "I pulled these emotions out of people."

In one scene, Green portrays a woman forced to leave her village with nowhere to go. In another, the four women in the company satirize the militia. Changing costumes six times, they play multiple roles as refugees, worshippers, family members and people in the street.

Also integrated into the multi-media production are projections of media figures, broadcasts from Serbian radio and cherished rituals, such as the lighting of a candle on a family's saint's day. Three children appear in one scene playing hand games against a backdrop of war. Refugee actress Zana Jovanovic relates ancient legends and personal stories that Green unearthed during a two-year research period.

"Ninety percent of the dance is based on things people said and did," Green said. "The actress

folk and gypsy music played live by PECTOPAH, a New York band of Serbian and Serbian-American musicians. Cleveland musician Walt Mahovlich will also perform.

Green, who premiered the work last fall at the Cathedral of St. Sava in New York, said she had a couple of reasons for staging the piece in a sacred space rather than a theater.

"I didn't think Serbians in New York would go to a theater, and I knew the American dance audience would go to an alternative space," she said. "I'm bringing a new audience to see modern dance."

This summer, the production will be performed in Belgrade, and it will tour throughout Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Italy.

"It's a big project. It's very moving," Green said. "When we did it in New York, people were crying. But there are sections that are lighter. You cannot have sadness for one hour and 20 minutes."

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DANCE PREVIEW

Valerie Green/Dance Entropy

What: The New York company performs "Homeland — Inner Side."

When: 8 p.m. Saturday.

Where: St. Sava Serbian Orthodox Cathedral of Cleveland, 6306 Broadview Rd., Parma.

Tickets: \$15. Call 216-371-3734.

THE GAZETTE

(Broadview Heights, OH)

May 23, 2001

Local Girl Brings Serbian Dance to Town

Serbian National University "Vuk Stef. Karadzich" presents Valerie Green/Dance Entropy in "HOMELAND - INNER SIDE". A multi-media dance theater piece based on the unrest in the former Yugoslavia, conceived, choreographed, and directed by NYC artist Valerie Green. One performance only to take place at The Main Hall of The Saint Sava Serbian Orthodox Cathedral of Cleveland at 6306 Broadview Road, Parma, Ohio 44134 on Saturday May 26, 2001 at 8:00 p.m.

Admission is \$15. For reservations call (216) 371-3734. Tickets can be purchased at the door.

The work embodies strong characters portrayed by a community of women including Valerie Green, Emily Bunning, Joy McEwen, Michelle Cohen and Zana Yovanovic as well as children from the church community. There is an aura of Serbian culture surrounding the show with a style of dance that is a fusion of contemporary modern with the intricate footwork of Eastern European folk dance. Movement material created with dancers while teaching in Belgrade has been worked into the performance, as well as ancient legends, personal stories and memories inspired by family and friends. Footage from Yugoslavian film makers George Bogdanich, Vladimir Bibic and Sergei Bodic will be projected.

Valerie Green is a 1991 graduate of Brecksville-Broadview Hts. High School.



Dancers Valerie Green, Michelle Cohen, Emily Bunning and Christina Amendolia perform in "Homeland-Inner Side". The Multi-Media dance theater piece is directed and choreographed by 1991 BBHS graduate, Valerie Green.