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DANCE REVIEW

ASPECTS OF JEWISH LIFE, THOUGHTFUL OR ROLLICKING

By Jennifer Dunning

CAROLYN DORFMAN DANCE COMPANY
JOHN JAY COLLEGE THEATER

"Wasn't that wonderful? And it was so Jewish," a beaming audience member said at "Mayne Mentsn" ("My People"), a program presented by the Carolyn Dorfman Dance Company on Sunday afternoon. Ms. Dorfman did address Jewish life in the two dances on the program, but the messages were universal, communicated by a group of strong dancers who could act.

Ms. Dorfman set her tone in the opening moments of "The Klezmer Sketch" and "The American Dream," danced to rollicking and sad music by Greg Wall, with solos danced eloquently by Wendee Rogerson, an anonymous figure in a trench coat and hat who might have symbolized the plain, enduring Jewish spirit. Curved arms reached up in joy and ecstatic prayer in the solos, sprouting from a long, stretched, modern-dance body that also communicated intense emotion.

An extended family coursed through the rituals of everyday life in "The Klezmer Sketch," whose

central images were an arranged marriage and a meal around a table ringed by gesticulating men and women. Christophe Jeannot was the

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charmingly bashful groom. A radiant, giddy Nancy Shevitz was his bride. The piece ends with family

members rising from the table and clustering tight to the sound of a shofar that may be signaling the arrival of Rosh Hashana but also sounds like an air-raid siren.

"The American Dream" takes the dancers on a long sea crossing and into a foreign land where

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they gradually become assimilated into a new culture. One highlight was an amusing battle of words between Pamela Wagner as a devout young Jew and

Deirdre Smith as a hyper-American Jewish transplant. The fine cast was completed by Noel MacDuffie, Emily Gayeski and Jon Zimmerman. John Evans designed the emotionally resonant lighting.