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## FREAK AND GREEKS

No one can take their eyes off Blondie's Deborah Harry

by Tony Phillips



Rehearsal room 6A of Mikhail Baryshnikov's luxe, new arts center on West 37th Street has some fairly commanding views of the Hudson River. Yet none of the MoveOpolis! dancers assembled here this afternoon are gazing out the windows that line two of the walls. And it's not because of some laser-like dancer's focus or narcissistic gazing into the mirrors that line the other two walls. Rather, it's simply a question of why would their attention stray anywhere when they're in the same room with Deborah Harry?

"Let's do our usual M.O.," the choreographer Richard Move tells his company. "And just plow through it."

He's wearing a baggy, maroon and light-blue tracksuit top by

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Adidas with matching maroon pinstriped pants. A scrunched up maroon knit hat caps off the entire ensemble. Move spends most of his time behind a table at the front of the room. It's littered with Blondie CDs and other research. I almost assume a book from the Istanbul Archeological Museum and Kiefer Sutherland's *Rolling Stone* cover are artfully juxtaposed for my benefit. Move fiddles with a boom box to get sound cues right. "Of course this will all be looped later," he says to no one in particular.

"The curse of religion and no one wants to choose," Harry sings as she crosses downstage on a diagonal.

"Oh, that's nice," Move whispers to me. "Layers, layers, layers!" A series of beeps—an electronic facsimile of a construction site—blare from the boom box. Rasta Thomas, in red sweats and a Rolling Stones baby-T, is swinging a golf club as he steps to center stage. It's hard to know if he's in this scene or just wandering around and stretching with his club. "Let's go back a little bit," Move suggests. "And make sure we have our traffic together." He's fairly calm for a man blocking a room full of Greek gods and goddesses.

Harry, who plays the Goddess and game-show host Athena, gets an individualized

have a quick smoke, he stops on the stairs and points out Baryshnikov's private apartment. Once rooftop, Move asks, "Do you realize how major he is?"

I realize we've moved on from the subject of Misha and are now talking about Rasta Thomas, a star on the ballet circuit, most recently seen dancing the lead in Twyla Tharp's Broadway ballet *Move! Out*. It's a fairly neat trick. When faced with the prospect of replacing the piece's world-renowned star for its New York premiere, Move simply went with a younger, faster model. But he still tweaks the long shadow of Baryshnikov by leaving his voice in the piece.

He performs a similar sleight of hand with Deborah Harry. She initially appeared only as a voice track, but now he's got her—no pun—in the flesh. "And she's so incredibly up for it," Move laughs, thrilled to be working with her again. But even she's still synching to her original 2002 voice track. The two met as downtown doyennes at the Factory-like performance nightclub Mother, where Move channeled dance legend Martha Graham in his *Martha@Mother* sets. On just the afternoon I'm observing, Harry's almost taken out by some of Rasta's Capoeira acrobatics that are the basis for one of



MOVE'N OUT: Deborah Harry does New York in Richard Move's *The Show* (*Achilles Heels*).

pow-wow. "Debs," Move calls out, jogging over to her and grabbing her under her elbow as they stroll and work out her blocking. She's wearing a pair of black sweats with a white racing stripe up the side and "Ramones" stenciled across the front thigh. She's nodding vigorously and following Move's directions for her stage cross with her eyes. Then Move turns to Rasta and says, "The golf club is nowhere for me if you're not playing golf." Rasta also nods vigorously.

They take it from the top and then begin to work a section of *The Show* (*Achilles Heels*) that leans quite heavily on dubbed sound. Rasta is simultaneously lip-synching what sounds like old gladiator movie dialogue and then the unmistakable Russian drawl of Baryshnikov. Like Harry, Misha also looms large over this piece. When *The Show* was originally conceived by Move in 2002, it was for Baryshnikov and Mark Morris' White Oak Dance Project, and Baryshnikov danced the lead of the cross-dressing *Achilles*.

These days, he's taken a backseat as *The Show's* presenter, but when Move and I duck out to the 37 Arts roof so he can

his more staggering solos.

"I need a spear," she says to Move when Rasta's foot comes dangerously close to her head, but she doesn't mind at all.

"I think it's going really well," she says, plopping down into a chair next to me. "It's only my third day."

Soon she's up for another "Debs" elbow stroll with Move, and then she's launching into some overhead hands-to-the-nearest-exits movement that Move coaches from behind the table as "more aircraft, more stewardess!" They haven't even begun to rehearse her rap, and the orgy's coming up next.

As Move and I sit behind the table watching a configuration of dancers center stage while Debbie stands slightly off stage-left, he asks me, "You see the problem?" I notice we're both staring at Harry and ignoring everything else that's happening onstage.

"She can take your eye so easily," Move marvels. "It's not a bad set of problems to have."

April 27-29; May 2-6, *The Kitchen*, 512 W. 19th St. (btw. 10th & 11th Ave.), 212-255-5793 x11; 8, \$20.