

LA JOLLA LIGHT

Malashock striving to keep his art sacred and profane

By LANCE VARGAS

As an art form, words are clunky. They are binding, absolute and many times, only come close to accurately conveying their message.

Dancer and Choreographer John Malashock feels the more ethereal mediums such as music and dance can tap into an audience member's psyche in a manner that other mediums may never achieve.

"(Dance) is the opportunity to express without the limitation of words," he said. "Or to be able to express so emotionally and physically at the same time. As dancer and as choreographers, there is a real high about being able to do that. Then, what you hope to do as a choreographer is transfer that feeling to the audience to where the work is impacting them emotionally and on a real visceral level." Malashock has been the artistic director and namesake for Malashock Dance for more than 15 years and has been involved in dance for 25. He formed his first company as a means to stoke his creativity and have more control over his medium and tell his own stories.

"I came into dance through theater, so I never lost the sense of enjoying telling stories, but dance was more my medium," he said. "I was a professional dancer for a good 10 years and then wanted to create some of my own work, and it has led from there. And, here we are at the company's 15th year here in San Diego"

In a stroke of serendipity or perhaps due to many different people and company's forming a genuine movement, Malashock formed his company at a time when dance in San Diego was giving the Los Angeles scene a run for its money. Many believe that the choreographers and dancers here in San Diego have surpassed Los Angeles.

"(The San Diego scene) has progressed a lot," said Malashock. "There is a lot more work going on here. There are quite a number of companies and a lot of individual artists. It's a much more diverse and enriched dance scene than a lot of people realize."

Helping the modern movement along is a growing interest from art lovers who are just now beginning to attend more live shows and see what all the fuss is about.

"A lot of people are a little intimidated by dance and they

tend to stay away. But, I tend to work in a way that is very accessible and appealing and yet has a lot of richness and depth to it. ... People for a lot of reasons, when they hear dance, they run screaming in the other direction. But it's so beautiful and so appealing"

Helping draw these people in is the blurred lines of interpretation that dance exhibits. It can mean a lot of things to a lot of people but mostly, those things are related to each other.

Malashock also feels that dance appeals to an audience members soul.

"It's the difference between processing something with your brain and processing it with your gut," he said. "I think that is one of the real strengths of dance that people react to it on the gut level. In the same way that music tends to put people into a very emotional state."

Malashock's latest show is "Malashock: Sacred & Profane" and is a celebration of his company's 15th anniversary season. The show will feature the highest and lowest of Malashock's choreography including performances of "Blessings & Curses," "Love & Murder," "I & Thou" and "The Soul of Saturday Night." Performances will take place in Sherwood Auditorium at the Museum of Contemporary Art, San Diego.

"Blessings & Curses" is a dance suite from theater/dance work of Jewish culture. "Love & Murder" is set to the songs of Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds. It is a dark, yet humorous, choreographic take on life and lifelessness. "I & Thou" is the premiere of Malashock's newest exploration into the mystical realms, set to the music of John Tavener. "The Soul of Saturday Night" is Malashock's dance film collaboration with John Menier of UCSD-TV. Shot on location all over San Diego, this made-for-the-camera work captures the seamy, low-life world so appealingly portrayed in Tom Waits' legendary "Heart of Saturday Night" album.

For more information about Malashock, visit his Web site at www.malashockdance.org. The remaining performance dates are Saturday and Sunday, Nov. 8-9, at 7 p.m. Tickets are \$24-\$12, and can be purchased at the door or in advance by phoning (619) 260-1622. Call about group ticket discounts. Sherwood Auditorium is located at 700 Prospect St.