Collaborators Build *Rage* From Riot

by HEATHER WISNER

It all began with the sound of fury—glass breaking, whistles screaming, protestors chanting.

Composer Bob Ostertag, tape recorder in hand, captured the formidable public anger that fueled a riot outside the California State Office Building in October 1991 after Gov. Pete Wilson, who campaigned for the gay and lesbian vote, vetoed AB 101, a gay civil rights bill 10 years in the making.

The riot became music, now, it has become dance. The Margaret Jenkins Dance Company celebrates its 20th anniversary by performing a site-specific work set to the score Kronos Quartet commissioned from Ostertag and his recording, *All the Rage*. Performances are held Nov. 19-21 at Yerba Buena Gardens. The Kronos Quartet and guest choreographer/soloist Remy Charlip will join the company onstage.

Multi-media artistic collaboration and technology moved *All the Rage* from civil disobedience into an intricate, dynamic expression of outrage. "I isolated sections of the tape that sounded like music; the rhythmic chanting "We're here, we're queer, get used to it," "Burn it, burn it down," and the whistles, put them into the computer and shaped them into musical structure," says Ostertag. During the dance, the Kronos Quartet plays over the tape, approximating the pitch of shattering windows or shouting.

Author Sara Miles wrote text for *All the Rage*, breaking it into four sections: growing up gay, gay bashing, AIDS and same-sex love. Jenkins heard the score when Kronos gave it its 1992 premiere in the Berkshires. "I was very moved by it," she says. "It expresses gay rage, the important issues of the community and the fallout from a nation ignoring people dying of AIDS. I feel strongly about this—much of the community that supports me, that dances with me, is gay. I've lost so many friends. This piece speaks to my anger. Through the last 10 years it's been an emotional rollercoaster ride for all of us."

Jenkins enlisted Associate Artistic Director Ellie Klopp and author/artist Remy Charlip, a former member of Merce Cunningham's company, to create choreography that would be set on company members and 60 additional performers drawn from the Bay Area's artistic community. The piece opens with a vignette on taunting and bashing, which develops into a riot with antagonists (police) versus protestors, followed by same-sex couples dancing duets together and concluding with Charlip dancing solo.

"Because it is so specific, it needed emotional continuity, an inner logic or line to make the transitions," says Charlip, who set movement against Miles' lead-ins, among them: "The first time I saw a gay person bashed..." "The first time I lost a friend to AIDS..." "The first time I said I love you to a man..." To bolster the continuity of the piece, Charlip asked deaf acquaintances about the theatrical use of sign language, which he incorporates in the choreography as a sort of group language, furthering the work's emotional resonance. "It's passionate," says Charlip of the collaborative effort. "Wild and wonderful and very moving."

Jenkins's award-winning work *Age of Unrest* will also be performed, accompanied by the Paul Dresher Ensemble. The Ensemble and the Kronos Quartet will also perform separately during the evening. Pomo Afro Homos' Eric Guppon will read Miles' text live.

Performances are held 8 p.m. Nov. 19 and 20, 7 p.m. Nov. 21 at the Center for the Arts, Yerba Buena Gardens (701 Mission St.). Call (415) 978-ARTS or 978-2787 to reserve tickets.