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DANCE REVIEW | 'WORD BECOMES FLESH'

# An Autobiographical Tale in Which Movements Speak

By JACK ANDERSON

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**W**ords danced and movements spoke in "Word Becomes Flesh," the eloquent autobiographical one-man show that Marc Bamuthi Joseph presented on Thursday night at Dance Theater Workshop.

Mr. Joseph based this seamless blending of dance and speech on letters he wrote to his unborn, and unplanned, son. But the production was more than a meditation on childbirth from a father's viewpoint.

Mr. Joseph described the ethical and emotional difficulties that he and the boy's mother faced when they decided they did not wish to marry or continue their relationship, yet vowed to raise their child with care. He also commented on the ways that stereotyped cultural images of masculinity can plague black men.

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His remarkable vocal variety and gestural deftness made every scene come alive in this show, directed by Gloria Bigelow. The choreography by Mr. Joseph and Adia Whitaker combined realistic gestures with steps derived from tap, hip-hop and modern dance. And music for guitar, bass and percussion composed and played by Paris King, Sekou Gibson and Ajayi Jackson enhanced the drama. Memorable moments included Mr. Joseph's nervous twitching as he sat in a gynecologist's waiting room, the monstrously twisted way he crept across the floor as a personification of racism and ignorance and his frantic prancing as he portrayed a minstrel-show entertainer. When he told the unborn son, "You're three months in the womb and I'm wishing you away," he followed this painful confession with desperate leaps and wild runs. But he filled the birth scene with a sense of both effort and exaltation. The son, Mr. Joseph told the audience, is now almost 3.

*The final performance is tonight at Dance Theater Workshop, 219 West 19th Street, Chelsea.*

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