

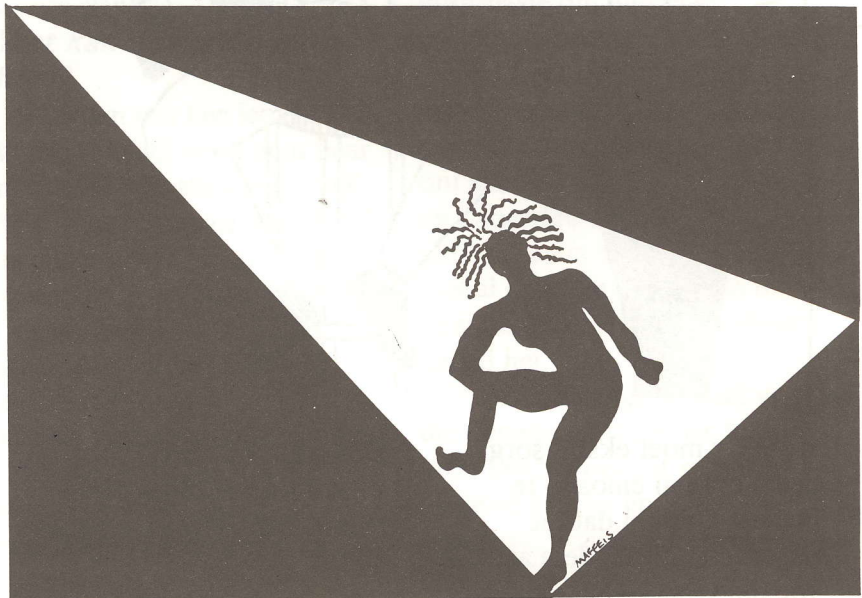
Move Your Body

by Sonia Maffeis

"In the centre of a room, a girl waits anxiously for the music to begin, her body tense in a neon-bright leotard. Her bare feet protruding from swatches of ankle-legging, flex one final time before they must carry her to a new plane of physical grace. As she begins to unfurl in time and space ..."(The Face)

In dance, there are no easy ways out: you have to be able to do it. You have to get up on the stage and do difficult things in such a way that you don't draw attention to the technique, but to what you're trying to express through it. In almost all forms of dance whether it be ballet, modern jazz, traditional, contemporary or classic, the dance movement reflects basic human behaviour and emotions - "it's like taking what you feel on the inside and putting it outside." If you don't feel it cerebrally, you have to allow yourself to experience it physically; you have to empathise with the movement and the music.

Dance is a traditional medium of expression, and a classical art form. But it has not been accorded the status of other visual arts - it is often regarded as a fun, fashionable pastime. From belly dancers to go-go girls, female dancers have been seen as providers of sexual entertainment. Contemporary dancers dedicate themselves mind and body to their art. Unfortunately due to common misconceptions, they seldom



receive the credit they deserve. The current movement of women in dance is now breaking those barriers. Women are starting their own dance companies and dance troupes, especially in East Africa, Botswana, Zimbabwe, Latin America. This trend which has also taken off in the United States and Europe. They are being recognised and respected for their own contributions in this ancient form of art - dance. For many African women, dance is a source of income, a form of expression, a vehicle for the portrayal of serious issues such as teenage pregnancy,

violence against women, abortion. In short - a vital contribution to the women's movement.

A dancer learns from various influences: theatre, mime, art - then the rhythm finally moves her. She has to interpret the rhythm, she has to find ways to respond and to express her internal being: Dance is a game of random choreography. It takes dedication and time to make the body talk.

In Namibia, the talent exists - but we have to find the commitment to develop it and to create a dance form which we claim as truly our own. ■