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DANCE

DANCE REVIEW

Anything but the Compagnie line

A French troupe
blithely mixes dance,
theater and video arts.
Structure lurks.

By CHRIS PASLES
Times Staff Writer

Like the early pioneers of cinema, Compagnie Mulleras revels in the exuberant possibilities of new technology. There are no rules, no theories, no history before which it need genuflect. And like their early filmmaker counterparts, its members offer up inventive, joyful, short segments — scenes, rather than acts; short stories, rather than novels. But there are no plots.

Mixing dance, theater and video arts, the five-member, Béziers, France-based troupe made its U.S. debut Wednesday at the Skirball Cultural Center with a 50-minute work, "minia@tures, Phase 2."

Composed of 100 short film clips originally developed for the Web (they can still be seen at www.mulleras.com), the show adds a real-life dimension as another element to play with.

In front of a large screen, Didier Mulleras, Magali Viguier-Mulleras, Elizabeth Nicol and Severine Prunera danced separately and together in various combinations. Their images were computer-multiplied and

manipulated on screen amid a forest of Mondrian lines in motion, or words, or abstract or natural images, by Nicolas Grimal.

That description hardly begins to suggest the beauty, fluidity and wit of the results.

One dancer pushed aside dark, on-screen lines encroaching on her, and the effect was accomplished so seamlessly, it was impossible to tell if she was in our space or film space or if there was a new dimension altogether.

That seamlessness was the constant throughout the piece.

A number of miniature Magritte-like images of a dancer seemed to parachute onto the outstretched arms of a live company member, then slide off and explode into a burst of dots as she tilted to the side. But live dancers could also seem to shrink to Lilliputian size as a giant on-screen hand or finger began poking at them.

They could also appear to fall into the "depths" of the screen as easily as they moved toward the audience.

There is a wonderful sense of play and possibility in the work of Compagnie Mulleras. There is also perhaps a clock ticking. The early filmmakers soon began developing structures that deepened but also limited their choices. We should probably enjoy this phase of Compagnie Mulleras while we can.