

ARTS

CULTURE COVERAGE FOR THE CITY AND BEYOND

Foehringer explores 'Sacred and Profane'

By **Andrea Pflaumer**
Special to The S.F. Examiner

For San Francisco choreographer Mark Foehringer, whose new multimedia work is titled "Dances of the Sacred and Profane," the term "sacred" implies otherworldly, rather than religious, and "profane" applies to everyday physical matter.

The world premiere, presented by the Mark Foehringer Dance Project at Fort Mason's Cowell Theater (reopening Saturday after an 18-month seismic retrofit and renovation) was inspired by Impressionist era art and music. But Foehringer didn't take a literal approach.

"The work focuses on the qualities of layering, light and reflections found in Impressionist paintings," he says.

In his most ambitious work to date, Foehringer and his collaborators — installation artist Camille Utterback and

Stanford University composer-sound engineer Michael St. Clair — created a unique, contemporary language for the piece, which explores timing, memory and angles through dance, motion capture projection and music.

Foehringer met Utterback at a workshop presented by the Woodside-based Djerassi Resident Artists Program showcasing an interactive video tracking computer system called danceroom Spectroscopy. The technology was developed by British quantum physicist David Glowacki, who figured out a way to create graphics that respond in real time to the dancers' movements.

Using onstage cameras, Utterback captures and manipulates the movements, which are projected onto large-panel LCD screens.

"Computers are good at holding information to access at a later time," Utterback says. What she loves about



Melissa Kaufman-Gomez and Tunde Woodman appear in Mark Foehringer Dance Project's multimedia world-premiere "Dances of the Sacred and Profane."

the work is the way the images offer a visceral connection between the real and the virtual.

St. Clair's digitally created musical

motifs, excerpted from works by composers Debussy, Faure and Ravel, add another layer to the piece. Composing in collaboration with Foehringer and

IF YOU GO **Mark Foehringer Dance Project**

When: 8 p.m. Saturday
 and Thursday-Sept. 21,
 3 p.m. Sunday

Where: Cowell Theater,
 Fort Mason, Marina
 Boulevard and Buchanan
 Street, S.F.

Tickets: \$18.50 to \$28.50
Contact: (800) 838-3006,
www.brownpapertickets.com,
www.mfdpsf.org

Utterback, St. Clair explains, "We were thinking about the dappling of light ... the broken up washes of color, so to speak."

The prominence and importance (and happy coincidence) of the letters DSP — digital signal processing and dances, sacred and profane — to the project is not lost on Foehringer.

"I began to appreciate the relationship more and more as the piece developed," he says.

The hourlong "Dances of the Sacred and Profane" is an ideal production to reopen the Cowell Theater, known for presenting installation performances. New draperies, sound, video, communication and acoustic improvements comprise the theater's first renovation since it opened in 1989.

Stylistically, "Dances" also is a departure for Foehringer, whose primary focus has been a ballet repertoire.

"It represents where I am now," he says.