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**SECTION:** NEWS; Pg. 2B

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**HEADLINE:** In small ways and big gestures, **TU Dance** delivers celebration of life;  
**DANCE REVIEW:** Uri Sands, Toni Pierce-Sands and some of the area's best dancers come together in diverse works.

**BYLINE:** Rohan Preston, Staff Writer

### **BODY:**

To the strains of Middle Eastern music, a bare-backed figure trundles onstage in dim light on all fours, shifting like one of those hyenas in "The Lion King."

Its visible muscles seem articulate. Soon, the animal-like creature is joined in a slant line by another and then another until it is a caravan of tarantula-like trundlers, coming out of darkness on one end and returning to it at the other.

The Bedouin-themed suite, "Wayfarers," is a world premiere by choreographer Uri Sands. The work is interesting at its beginning and its rhythmic, ecstatic end. Its middle section, unfortunately, is an unclear mixture, both in its choreographic ideas and the dancers' searching execution.

You have to endure "Wayfarers" to see the muscular grace of Sands, whose show runs through the weekend in Minneapolis, but it is well worth it.

Sands and fellow ex-Ailey dancer Toni Pierce-Sands, founders of the company **TU Dance**, have a knack for assembling all-star ensembles. This concert is no exception, showcasing some of the most gorgeous movers in the Twin Cities, including Mary Ann Bradley, Stephanie Fellner and Stephen Schroeder.

The bill mixes intimate chamber pieces, including a fetching solo by Pierce-Sands, with bigger ensemble works for all 11 dancers. The smaller pieces are surer in their poetry. For example, Sands and Pierce-Sands perform a witty duet called "High Heel Blues" that is set to a whimsical a capella song of the same name by Tuck and Patti.

Also full of levity is "The Color Interlude," another premiere by Sands set to music by Seal and featuring the springy dancing of Schroeder, Alec Donovan and Brazilian mover Marciano Silva dos Santos. These three men

give it beautiful lift.

The highlight of the evening is the finale, "...-Isms," a powerful, kinetic premiere performed by the whole company. Set to a live recording of music by Rare Earth, it is notable for its group attitude, its '70s hipster costumes by Tulle and Dye, and its overall verve.

The piece begins with the ensemble in a cluster. Bottom-shaking Dinita Nicole, moving as if she can shift the axis of the world with her hips, releases the dancers from their suspended state and they go on propulsive individual and group experiences, only to come together at the end.

"...-Isms" quotes pop culture, style and, even, get-happy gestures from the black church, something that at first seemed incongruous with the blistering music. And yet, given the overall context, the mixture is most apt. This closing piece, like the concert itself, pulls in many disparate elements in a triumphant celebration of life.

Rohan Preston - 612-673-4390

## **TU DANCE**

What: A dance concert choreographed by Uri Sands.

Where: Southern Theater, 1420 Washington Av. S., Minneapolis.

When: 8 p.m. Thursday and Friday, 2 and 8 p.m. Saturday, 7 p.m. Sunday.

Tickets: \$17-\$25. 612-340-1725.

**GRAPHIC: PHOTO**

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