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## DANCE IN REVIEW



Carol Rosegg

H. T. Chen and Dancers celebrate their 25th anniversary at LaMaMa.

### East Meets West As Partners or Duelists

*H. T. Chen and Dancers  
LaMaMa E.T.C.*

H.T. Chen and Dancers celebrated its 25th anniversary on Thursday night at LaMaMa E.T.C. with a new movie, a new dance and a revival of an old one.

The movie was "13 Sounds, 25 Years," a documentary directed and produced by Don Quinn Kelley that traced the company's growth. The dancers were glimpsed performing onstage and conducting community workshops.

The cast of the new "Fifth Wall" often carried cloth panels, tilting them as they moved to a commissioned score by Ushio Torikai that combined taped sounds with live percussion music. At times Erin Lesser wandered serenely across the stage playing the flute.

But the choreography was seldom serene. When performers divided into pairs, it was sometimes hard to tell if they represented dancing partners or duelists. Such scenes recalled Asian martial arts and showed how Mr. Chen, who was born in Shanghai, likes to mix traditional Chinese movements with Western modern-dance steps.

Groups rapidly formed and dissolved. Dancers standing on top of one another became human towers. Melissa Caywood scurried nervously through a solo. Hsin-Ya Hou looked awed in another solo. Nevertheless she tried to struggle onward. But in the dramatically ambiguous conclusion, panels dropped on Ms. Caywood, burying her.

Mr. Chen sometimes fills dances with actions that appear to be private choreographic symbolism. Yet as "Fifth Wall" demonstrated, contrasts between tension and relaxation, and activity and repose, make these actions vivid even when they are not literally comprehensible.

The evening's revival was "Opening the Gate," which dates from 1993. Its score by Bradley Kaus, blended electronic sounds with drumming by the dancers.

Several scenes were solemnly ceremonial. Dancers also surged forward like warriors or eager explorers. Because retreats gave way to fresh surges, "Opening the Gate" seemed to celebrate struggles: in this case, creative ones.

JACK ANDERSON