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DANCE | DANCE REVIEW

Redrawing 'Map,' From Different Angles

## Shen Wei Dance Arts Performs at Judson Memorial Church

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If you're a regular at Judson Memorial Church you might not recognize the space this week. Filling the usually bare-bones sanctuary are multiple levels of seating, towers of theatrical lights and, sprouting up from the expansive floor, seven gargantuan balloons (cubes, globes) painted with arrows and other symbols, indecipherable maps.

The occasion is a revival of "Map," a stunning 2005 work by the Chinese-born choreographer Shen Wei. On Tuesday his company, Shen Wei Dance Arts, unveiled a new version, adapted from its original proscenium setting for an audience in the round.

While "Map" looked good on a traditional stage, this is a felicitous reimagining. The proximity of the 16 dancers exposes the subtleties of Mr. Shen's finely calibrated language: the rotation of a shoulder in its socket, the way an ankle catches the opposite calf or one knee nests behind the other. And the use of the balloons underscores the dancers' very particular energy, an uncanny infusion of weight and weightlessness, of acting and being acted upon.

The first order of business is to untether those balloons. This happens in darkness and silence: When the lights come on, along with Steve Reich's exultant "Desert Music," they are floating skyward. You could spend the next 40 minutes just studying the inscriptions, the encoded choreography, on their swollen surfaces. (Mr. Shen, also a visual artist, is responsible for the design.) You might find yourself gazing up, comparing these flight plans with all that's transpiring below.

Where to look? From the moment Kate Jewett begins to fold and unfold herself on the ground, activating others around her in floor-sweeping unison, the eye never rests, nor does it want to. Through five sections, herd-like formations dissolve and resolve, incarnating the strata of Mr. Reich's score. Loners appear, like the angelic Janice Lancaster Larsen, blowing through like a tumbleweed. A careering circle takes shape toward the end; even several feet away, you can feel the gusts of air that trail the dancers.

A brief but significant coda followed: the world premiere of "Variations," a solo by and for Mr. Shen. If "Map" is a monsoon, engulfing the senses, "Variations" is a barely perceptible mist. Stephen Gosling, on piano, plays Arvo Pärt's spare "Variations for the Healing of Arinushka" as the slight Mr. Shen, in white, whisks himself around with the delicacy of a paintbrush. When he extends his arms horizontally his wingspan is much wider than you would imagine.

