

By CHARLES JURRIST

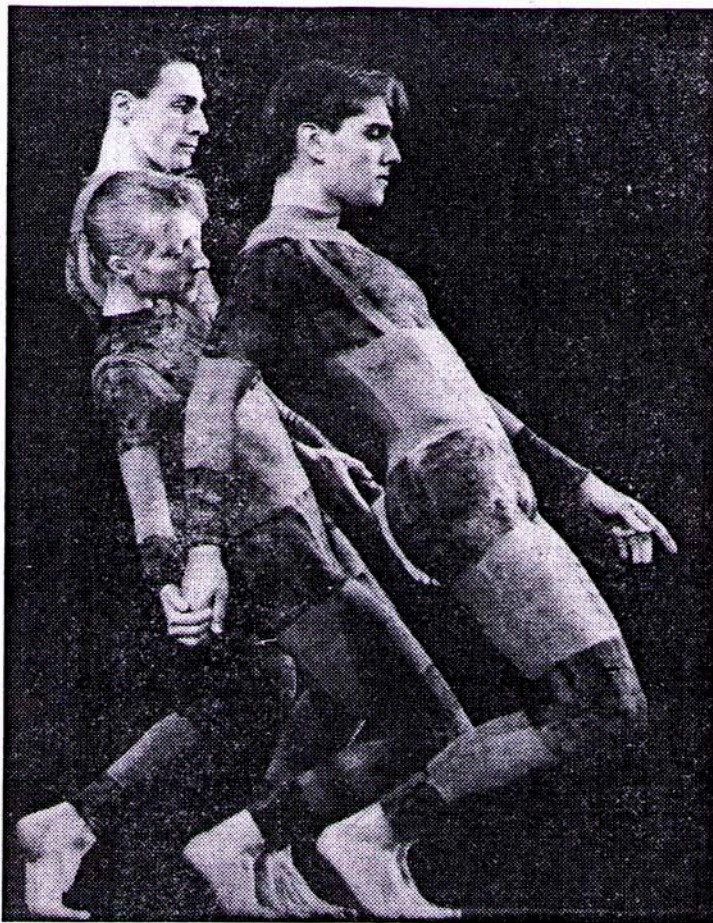
FIELD AND FIGURES," which had its local premiere at City Center on Tuesday, strikes me as one of Merce Cunningham's better dances.

Kristin Jones and Andrew Ginzell provided a brilliant set, a '50s modern astral landscape that recalls the decor of the sci-fi classic "The Forbidden Planet." The score — a noise environment of electronic burpings and spoken words — is inoffensive. And the choreographer has provided some lovely moments. One thinks of a quick cluster of truncated arabesques or a spot near the end where some of the dancers become conscious of the heavenly setting in which they're employed.

As always with Cunningham, however, I find myself thinking more about what I'm missing. Even his admirers admit that his works have no logic, so one is deprived of the pleasures yielded by structure — a series of engagements with form that leads to an apprehended resolution. And the movement itself is seldom allowed to unfold into lyricism and never into sensuality.

Most irksome, in repeated viewings, is Cunningham's depersonalization of his marvelous dancers. Only in rare instances does it matter which of them enacts a particular movement; or even whether the performer is male or female.

Not that they present an-



FIGURES ON A FIELD: Dancers from Merce Cunningham's company performing in his new work.

HARRY HAMBURG DAILY NEWS

drogynous forms. A number of the men are big and broad and the women aren't stick figures. They have real female bodies.

YET CUNNINGHAM tricks them out in gray, unisex leotards and runs them through his gray, neuter hops and twitches, and he contrives to desex

them utterly.

Not for the first time at a Cunningham evening, I found myself wasted by a famine of the senses. Yet hundreds around me were cheering, so there obviously is a way to derive real, visceral pleasure from this work. But it simply eludes me.

(Charles Jurrist writes frequently on dance.)