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Images of Devastating Grief and the Courage to Go On

By JACK ANDERSON

"Offering" would be impressive in any outdoor location. But this work, collaboratively choreographed by the Japanese-born dancers known as Eiko and Koma, gained special poignancy on Tuesday night when it was presented at Battery Park City under auspices of Dancing in the Streets and the Hudson River Festival.

The riverside space known as the Belvedere was dominated by a lumpish structure designed by the choreographers that from some angles looked like an altar while from others it resembled a Dumpster. Its top was covered with dirt, and branches protruded from it. Because the World Trade Center towers once rose nearby, the object and the choreography on it brought to mind images of death, devastation, grief and courage.

Throughout the dance, pedestrians passed by. Boats floated on the Hudson. The setting sun glittered in windows on the New Jersey shore. In the midst of life the structure stood as a reminder of death. Yet life also continued around this memorial.

A plaintive score for clarinet, played by its composer, David Krakauer, contributed to the melancholy. At various times during the hourlong piece, Eiko, Koma and another dancer, Lakshmi Aysola, pushed the branches on the structure, causing it to revolve.

Ms. Aysola climbed on top of it, standing like a noble goddess until she slowly lowered herself to lie on her back. Eiko joined her on the structure, bending over her as if to offer solace. Then both dancers stretched out motionless and this altar increasingly became reminiscent of a pyre.

Throughout the dance, dirt kept falling from the structure's sides with rustling noises. But Koma also poured fresh dirt on it. After helping Ms. Aysola down from it, he returned and placed lighted candles near Eiko who remained on the altar. The candles burned on. At last, the music stopped and Koma again offered his assistance, this time helping Eiko to the ground.

The dance was over. The sun had set. Yet windows glowed with lights. There were still boats on the Hudson and people coming and going. "Offering" was an elegy that nevertheless managed to suggest that healing can be possible.

Dancing in the Streets will repeat it at various times in several locales this month. It will surely take on fresh choreographic resonance wherever it is performed.

**Eiko
+ Koma**