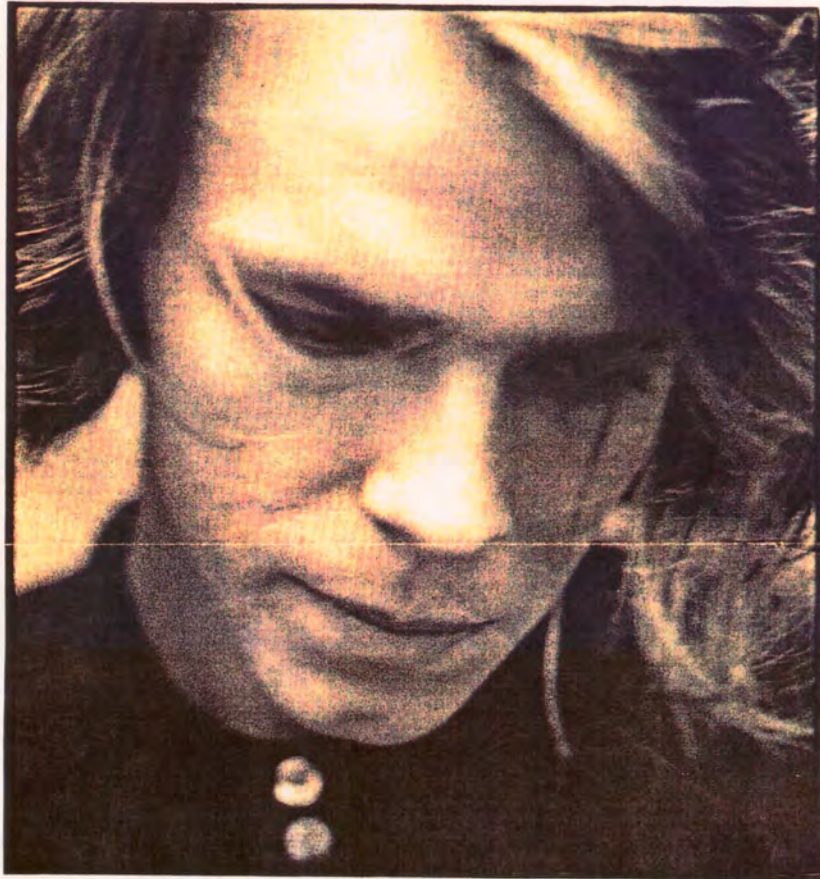


THE WEEK THAT WILL BE

Merce Cunningham's "August Pace" premieres, with designs by AFRIKA.



"I haven't seen anything yet. I've just arrived," says Afrika,

the slight, terribly serious young Soviet artist who's done the costume and backdrop design for this season's new Merce Cunningham work, *August Pace*. "I sent them sketches from Russia, but on opening night I'll be seeing the work for the first time. I thought about going to a rehearsal, but I wanted to see the whole thing fresh, after it was finished."

That's just how Cunningham usually works—with the dance coming together almost mystically at the last minute, of carefully chosen though disparate parts. One of those parts will be, as it usually is, a score by John Cage.

"I met Mr. Cage when he came to Russia

for a musical festival in 1988," Afrika says. (The artist retired his real name, Sergei Bugaev, after reading a gliborous newspaper account of a Soviet boy whose parents were diplomats in Kenya.) "I knew about Cage, since I liked his music and Soviet propaganda called him a 'charlatan of capitalistic culture.'" Last year, after coming to New York at the invitation of dealer Paul Judelson, who'd "discovered" him in the Soviet Union, Afrika met Cage again. He brought him to a performance of Cunningham's *Rainforest*, a far cry from traditional Russian ballet: "It was one of my first, big shocks about the West," Afrika says.

He's only 24, but he seems more mature

than most American artists his age—possibly because at the age of 14 he "escaped" his small town on the Black Sea for Leningrad, where he established himself as an "unofficial" artist. And though his geometric, Day-Glo paintings are selling well here, Afrika's not limiting himself to mere canvas. He's acted in and art directed a Russian film and is eager to drive across America this spring with his video camera in hand. In fact, it's the film connection that's seemed to have registered most with his parents.

"They're typical Soviet people," Afrika says, laughing. "They are happy that I'm an artist, but they are more happy because I could be a movie star." **Stephen Greco**



MARCH
8-14

Maggie Smith brings the long-awaited *Letting Go* to the Barrymore. The Sugar Cubes play the Beaton. John Patrick Shanley's film *Joe Versus the Volcano* opens, starring Tom Hanks and Meg Ryan. Peggy Lee sings at the Ballroom. *Car on a Hot Tin Roof*, starring Kathleen Turner, starts previews at the Eugene O'Neill. *Face the Music* gets under way at Symphony Space, with Allen Ginsberg interviewing Philip Glass. Buckwheat Zydeco takes over the Lone Star. The Ritz hosts Meatloaf. Dustin Hoffman closes in *The Merchant of Venice* after 99 performances. The National Academy of Design opens a show of master drawings by the Incauri. Steppenwolf's *The Grapes of Wrath* with Gary Sinise and Terry Kinney, begins performances at the Cort.