

The New York Times

By ANNA KISSELGOFF

"Anthem" has a commissioned score by Shelly Palmer that is indeed full of little anthems and fanfares. From this springboard, Mr. Parsons has conjured up an army of flag-bearing troops costumed smartly in black velvet, red trim and brass buttons by William Ivey Long.

Actually, the eight dancers (Jaime Martínez, Elizabeth Koeppen, Patricia Kenny, Matthew Rodarte, Mia McSwain, Robert Battle, Charissa Barton, Jason McDole and Ruth-Ellen Kroll) look more like bellboys, and the flags, big, small and in between, are solid gold, or in contrasting colors.

At the beginning and the end, "Anthem" is a Chinese flag dance, transposed from the Beijing Opera's battle scenes and a Chinese ribbon dance. The flags are whipped around, with dancers jumping over them or ducking under and the gold ribbons on sticks weaving curlicues and circles in the air.

The medley of colors as the transparent flags overlap among dancers who flit and snake around the stage looks gorgeous.

The only hostilities occur in the battle-of-the-sexes arena, with Ms. McSwain, petite, and Mr. Battle, tall, engaged in a combative love duet that is not without tenderness.



ATENTION, Olympic organizers in Sydney and Salt Lake City: David Parsons is your man.

"Anthem," introduced this week in his company's first City Center season, combines the scale and splendor of a first-rate Openin Ceremony with the dynamic choreography Parsons is famous for.

Fluttering, diaphanous flags in radiant hues fill the height and breadth of the stage space as the dancers fly across in navy-blue, brass-buttoned military tunics and red-striped pants. The costumes by William Ivey Long, the pumping, inflated score by Shelly Palmer, and the crisp, follow-the-leader choreography make clear that Parsons is having a go at military-style nationalism.

But the flag-waving gives way to romance when Robert Battle and Mia McSwain toss their banners aside and dance an ecstatic duet full of gorgeous turning lifts that ends when their compatriots return to smother them with the flags they have abandoned. Ultimately, though, the dancers all throw their pennants offstage, unbutton their jackets, and break into an exuberant dance of liberation.

You get the point, but you miss the flags. You know they're meant to represent repression, but what you respond to instead is the sheer loveliness of all those floating, silken colors. And you expect at any moment to hear someone intoning, "Let the Games begin!"

Newsday

By Sylviane Gold



Newsday Photo / Bruce Gilbert

Parsons company performs "Anthem" with splendor at City Center in Manhattan.

By Valerie Gladstone

In "Anthem," Parsons reveals his romantic nature. The commissioned score beats "Titanic" for sheer sweeping drama and the physical intensity of the pas de deux for Mia McSwain and Robert Battle makes the love scenes between Leonardo DiCaprio and Kate Winslet look like kindergarten. "We had a lot of fabric left over from another piece," Parsons jokes as the rehearsal begins with dancers rushing across the stage holding huge, silky, brightly colored banners. In fact, he says later, the fall of the Eastern Bloc dictatorships inspired him to make the dance. "It's about what it takes to be an individual," he explains. That's something both he and his famous guest artist, Malakhov, know a lot about. ■