

Dance

Ellis Wood, Dancing in the Dark



Ellis Wood Dance performed aggressive works from "the dark side" Saturday at Dance Place. (By Lois Greenfield)

Before Saturday night's Dance Place performance, choreographer Ellis Wood told the audience she was an artist who "embraced the dark side." She meant it. Through four works, Ellis Wood Dance careened through an array of dramatic, aggressive dancing.

In "Island Solutions," in which Dance Place's Repertory Class appeared alongside the six company dancers, Wood ingeniously turns light toward previously unseen spaces, literally. Individual dancers took turns carrying a hand-held light through the audience and the stage, focusing on various duets and solos, and finally a large group, which emerged slithering on their bellies from beneath a black curtain on one side of the stage. Other dancers cavorted while wielding heavy-duty flashlights, jerking spasmodically with a club-dancing undercurrent to their movement.

"Pignut" found Wood's dancers competing for a pile of nuts. The work developed the theme of competition quickly, but pounded in the same place for too long. But Wood's partnering -- her dancers are very strong women -- continually produced new ways (and new body parts) with which each dancer could keep another from attaining her goal: One woman scuttled another across the stage, rolling her torso between her feet; another pair linked arms around each other's waists, flipping repeatedly, their legs alternately flying in arcs like a human amusement park ride.

The program also included "Timeless Red," where a maniacal Wood, in a red velvet dress with a peacock-feather bustle, conjures the movements of the other dancers, and the short, sexually savvy "Lila Goes Fast."

-- Clare Croft