

BACK STAGE

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REVIEWS • Dance

Ellis Wood Dance

Reviewed by Lisa Jo Sagolla

Presented by and at Dance Theater Workshop, 219 W. 19 St., NYC, Nov. 17-20.

Dancer-choreographer **Ellis Wood** exudes an androgynous kinesthetic personality that's stylish and endearing. In her solo "Stella," the highlight of the evening of her choreography presented at Dance Theater Workshop, Wood punches at the air like a boxing champ, shifts her weight back and forth as speedily as a pro basketball player, kicks like a Rockette, undulates her midsection like an MTV babe, grins with pixieish glee, and jumps with the perky pep of a cheerleader. Yet despite the athletic uptempo kinetics of the dancing, the solo leaves behind a feeling of sadness—probably because it's too short. Performed to music by **Rufus Wainwright**—with lyrics lamenting a

life lived "on a fast train," always traveling—the dance is less than five minutes long, which is time enough for Wood to bewitch us with her physical prowess and girlish warmth. But just when we feel we've gotten to know her, she plants her legs in a simple stance, smiles sweetly, and raises an arm, as if to wave goodbye. The abrupt ending comes as a surprise and suddenly we're sad to see her go.

In "Air," the first portion of her new ensemble work "Hurricane Flora," Wood employs her signature highly physical style of choreographic expression to send dancers charging about the stage in abstract representations of life's little annoyances, acting upon an "Everywoman" soloist. Sometimes they look like bugs or burps or blips of things that tickle you, gnaw at you, or become an irritating itch. Sometimes they come together and offer support. We're left with the idea that it's ultimately our choice. We can let these forces defeat us or we can commandeer them to bolster our journey through life. The work's second section, "Earth," is choreographically

repetitious, yet ends with a wonderfully cathartic frenzy of action in which fresh flowers are hurled about the stage, food-fight-like, in a scene of pure hysteria.

Wood's program also included "Timeless Red," a quintet in which minimalist patterns of choreography are carefully constructed then exploded, in conveyance of dramatic notions of dominance and rebellion.