

ARTS&LETTERS

Young, Gifted, and Gasping for Breath



Steven Schreiber

Ron Todorowski and Tiger Martina in dre.dance's *fall*

By **JOY GOODWIN**

July 2, 2007 (excerpt)

dre. dance generated considerable attention when it arrived on the downtown scene two years ago, mainly because the actor-singer-dancer (and sometimes choreographer) Taye Diggs was lending his celebrity to a modern dance venture. With his childhood friend, the choreographer and electronic composer Andrew Palermo, Mr. Diggs has since developed a company with its own discernible style — no easy feat — and an intriguing future. Thursday's concert at the Joyce SoHo, however, was about the troupe's past: Of the 15 short pieces on the bill, only one was a premiere.

The evening started off well, with a quartet of hard-driving works performed with good attack by the muscular company of seven women and two men. (Neither Mr. Diggs nor Mr. Palermo was among the dancers.)

The fit, coolly contemporary young dancers wore frill-free, American Apparel-like clothes and performed to loud rock music that felt appropriate, given their youth. In "Id," by Mr. Palermo, the propulsive choreography took unexpected risks: hard, rough turns and falls that forced the dancers into organic motion. There was no hope of posing or being perfect given the difficulty and the pacing of these slides and hard drops to the floor. Even dances set to more muted music (Alexandre Desplat, Rufus Wainwright) contained irregular accents by way of strange bent knee extensions and jumps from a push-up position.

These first pieces were genuinely fresh, with a pleasing abstract aesthetic built of sharp angles, odd counts, deliberately rough edges, and limited horizontal motion, and danced with an intentionally crude athleticism.

The company's abstract aesthetic speaks well for itself, when Messrs. Palermo and Diggs allow it to do so.