

## DANCE REVIEW

# Showing The Power Of Clarity And Charm

By JENNIFER DUNNING

The program presented by Astrid Von Ussar on Friday night at the Joyce SoHo was notable for first-rate performing by vibrantly individual dancers. The themes of all six works were expressed clearly in authoritative choreography grounded in big, open movement. But the greatest charms of the evening were its loveliness and optimism.

Ms. Von Ussar, also a teacher at the Alvin Ailey Dance Center and other schools, approached life with refreshing simplicity in the program's three premieres. Three nonsense women (Danon Hinty, Meredith McGovern and Nichelle Wright) give an accommodating young man (Ryan Thompson) a buoyant, teasing run for his money in "Used, Abused & Unamused," set to pleasantly percussive music by Peter Kruder and Richard Dorfmeister. "Scratchy Ropes," set to music

Teasing, loving  
and other simple  
skills for living.

by composers including Ryuichi Sakamoto, was a duet for Ms. McGovern and the poet Corie Herman that charted a woman's growing awareness of her dependent and assertive selves and how to live with both.

There was anguish and doubt here, certainly, but no melodrama. What could have been sentimental was not, thanks to Ms. Herman's wonderfully plain-spoken poetry and delivery and the simplicity of the dancing and choreography.

"Time Shows No Face" was set to music by Wojcek Kilar that shifted between lyricism and sharp propulsiveness. It was danced by three guest artists (Duane Cyrus, Gregory Hinton and Nasha Thomas-Schmitt), veteran performers who seamlessly embodied those shifts.

Matthew Williams stood out in Ms. Von Ussar's recent "Hearts Divided" as the wildly hyperactive would-be lover of a woman (Sara Segulin) courted by a more suave young man (Robert Jones).

Ms. Wright stood out, too, for her go-for-broke dancing throughout. The fine company also included Liz Buehler, Stephen Contreras, Vanessa Villain, Jasmine Willoughby and the small, slightly built Soo-Hee Kim, who had the endearing quality of a crosspatch female warrior.