

## The New York Times

### Woman as Temptress And Coquettish Menace

There's something undeniable about the sexual power of a woman in heels.

There's something creepy and unnatural about it, too. Especially

#### DANCE REVIEW

CLAUDIA  
LA ROCCO

when those women are dancers, sometimes barefoot, as they alternately pick and rampage their way through Alma Esperanza Cunningham's uneven but potent "Princess," as seen Friday at the Joyce SoHo. Ms. Cunningham, a San Francisco choreographer, was joined by the Brooklyn-based Daniel Linehan, who presented a work in progress, "Not About Everything."

"Look at her hopping around. What's so good about Abby?" one of the four dancers mused in "Princess," her lazy drawl acquiring a nasty edge, as Abigail Munn took awkward little jumps in her pink polka-dotted heels, one long leg held by Rosemary Hannon. "It's just her shoes — Rosemary just wants her shoes."

So much for female solidarity. Ms. Cunningham likes her politics served up with equal doses of menace and inanity.

"Now Ingrid feels really insecure. She's feeling fat," the tall, skinny Ms. Hannon commented, as the more solidly built Ingrid Heilke and Larissa Thomas grappled fiercely with each other like wrestlers, acting out an unhealthy romance.

Their meaty power moves offset jutting, delicate steps and balances, as Ms. Cunningham sent her "Princess" lurching from one mood to the next. As feminism, like the arts, staggers through a gantlet of "post-this and that" labels, the rules of engagement keep getting fuzzier. At some point in this 40-minute work, though, you stop questioning Ms. Cunningham's rules, even as they constrict the performers, creating a

Alma Esperanza Cunningham Movement  
Joyce SoHo

pinched, cruel space.

Mr. Linehan also shrank his performance space — but literally, and with expansive results. After dropping books and magazines in a small circle around him, he invited the audience to sit outside the circumference, in close proximity.

Then he began to spin, accompanied by a recording of his own chanting voice. His longish blond hair whirling out around him (this angelic-looking young artist could probably score kids' tickets 9 times out of

*Always wielding  
a potent force,  
whether barefoot or  
wearing high heels.*

10), he recited assorted phrases: "This is not about everything; this is not about being impressed by me; performance is dead, go home safe to your bed."

The speed and positioning of his turns varied, from whipping to lazy rotations, in time to rhythmic shifts in the vocal score, continuing while he drank water, stripped down to pale blue skivvies or read a letter to the audience outlining his "ethical dilemma" over creating in such a brutal world.

Are art's questions enough to sustain people in 2007? Who can answer definitively? But in that moment, in that circle, they were.