

DANCE REVIEW | DRE DANCE

Childhood Friends Fuse Passion With Athleticism

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Mainstream actors don't usually dabble in dance, so it's a surprise to discover that Taye Diggs — who made his name in "Rent" and moved on to equal success on stage and in film and television — is also a choreographer. With his childhood friend Andrew Palermo (both grew up in Rochester, N.Y., where they attended the School of the Arts), Mr. Diggs has formed a company, Dre Dance, which presented "pre.view" over the weekend at the Ailey Citigroup Theater.



Andrea Mohin/The New York Times

Karen More and Tiger Martina in "pre.view" by Dre Dance.

Both men are credited with "concept and choreography" for the first part of the program, "pre" — a melodramatic dance about a love triangle set to music by Michael John La Chiusa, played live by an excellent quartet. The segmented story is shown in reverse, like Harold Pinter's "Betrayal," so that it begins with a suicide (or at least a dramatic fall from a ladder) and ends with a blissfully embracing couple. This reversed narrative would be hard to grasp without program notes, but although the piece feels too long and the music is often treacly, it's sustained by powerful dancing and often inventive movement. On Saturday night, Karen More, Jennifer Parsinen and Tiger Martina were all impressive as the tortured lovers — particularly Ms. More, strikingly intense in an opening solo of convulsive kicks, lashing arms and straight-legged jumps.

A surrounding Greek chorus of three women (Rachel Bress, Chesare Hardy and Shanna Vanderwerker) provided a more abstract counterpoint, their slow swooping, wheeling movements juxtaposed with forcefully energetic yet truncated gestures.

This combination of high energy, deliberate athletic gesture (loping runs, starter-block positions, ice-skating spins) and checked power seems to be the choreographers' signature style, and it held up remarkably well in the better second half, called "view." It seamlessly blended five pieces (the first three by Mr. Palermo, the last two by Mr. Diggs), visually unified by variations on red-and-black costumes and a nuanced lighting design by Kevin J. Greene. Particularly notable were Mr. Palermo's weird and wonderful "Uncle Gary" — a tour de force solo for Mr. Martina — and "Seen Study," a slow, beautifully patterned female quartet by Mr. Diggs that suggested he has every right to be taken seriously in his new venture.