

# dance

by Deborah Jowitt

**Roxanne and Pat Catterson  
and Friends: debut con-  
certs at the Theatre at St.  
Clement's**

Theatre at St. Clement's has been having a dance festival. Roxanne's debut performance took place there. The following weekend, three other groups were presented. And there's more coming. I made it to Pat Catterson and Friends. The title is revealing. Catterson seems so deprecating about her considerable talent that she can't even bring herself to admit that the evening is going to be anything but a groups of pals pal-ing around. You get the impression that once she starts making a dance, she's afraid to assume responsibility for it, for fear it'll resent being interfered with and curl up and die. So ultimately, nothing is edited or shaped; the dances ooze into place, all fascinating, and then just play themselves out.

The core of the Saint Clement's concert was "Someone Old New Borrowed Blue," a suite of four solos. The first, "Raindance," is performed by Regan Frey—a wild, slouchy, skinny girl. The dance seems perilous. Her skipping, skittering paths of easy-going dancing dead-end in some corner, up against some wall. She stares into the shadows, slams up against the back wall, tries to pretend she doesn't know herself. Catterson begins " 'Nothing at all, She Said' " lying on her back with her knees pressed to her forehead—just the way Frey ended. But Catterson is at the top of a long dark flight of stairs. She tilts the position and

begins a slow, crumbling descent of the stairs—lying down and rolling, sliding, twisting to the bottom. It's a wonderfully terrifying moment. Her solo is all a disintegration, but like Frey, she peers into the shadows while she rises, falls, reaches, falls, rolls, lifts, falls. Her body looks soft and heavy—muscles rotted away from fear. But then Merel Polloway appears—tense and narrowed—beside an armchair. She waits on, in, beside the chair for something or someone. She perches, and an imaginary being elbows her off. Very funny. She leaps into the chair over and over again and slides down into its embrace. She tries making her body rigid against it. Throughout, her self-control is almost unwavering, and the wild calliope music that accompanies much of the solo does her sobbing and laughing for her.

The fourth solo "Entrance" suggests a gloomy theatre in an amusement park, maybe in a nightmare. When Becky Arnold runs on, she isn't even dressed yet. Then, spotlights go out just as she reaches the core of their light. When lights do fade on, she appears to be blinded, and gropes her way through some careful acrobatics. At the end she chases the glow of a follow-spot,

gives up in disgust until it crawls to her and slowly envelops her body. She jumps once, and lands in in blackness.

Catterson's solos have a black humor, a mysterious and morbid quality that I like. But she handles them as if they're pets she raised who turned out too big and tough for her to control.

Her group works tend to be a little self-consciously chummy. The dancers joke and chatter and slap and tickle and pile up with each other; and in one dance their voices on tape tell us stories of their most embarrassing experience as performers or their first meetings with each other. You feel a warmth, as if these people (Christopher Bigelow, Livia Blankman, Clarica Marshall, and Steven Witt are the others) liked each other and liked working together. But I think maybe I'd rather discover their individuality for myself. Because whenever Catterson just makes a dance phrase and lets people dance it, things get quite interesting enough. And friendly, too. Her movement is lively and casual; it's meant to be delivered with a throw-away air, but—as movement, it's very intelligent and not at all shallow. Sometimes it's also beautiful or touching. I wish Catterson would ... I don't know ... claim it.