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Jennine Willett, who performs a solo to music by the Dang-It Bobbys, in the background, in "Vanishing Point."

This Ruminative Funeral Moves to a Country Beat

Performances presented by Danspace Project take place in St. Mark's Church: the tombstones in the entryway, with their poignantly terse testaments

DANCE REVIEW

ROSLYN
SULCAS

space.

Not Tom Pearson and Zach Morris, who have made several well-regarded site-specific works. Their new "Vanishing Point" might be considered another, since it is loosely centered on the idea of a funeral, with the audience, like a church congregation, facing a draped coffin on a bier.

Despite this somber frame-

A relaxed work, with big themes woven into monologues.

work the piece is charmingly relaxed from the opening moments, when Jennine Willett dances alone, with quick, earthy movements to the country music sounds of the Dang-It Bobbys, a three-member band to the right of the stage.

Mr. Pearson and Mr. Morris don't make a big play of doing Serious Experimental Work. "Vanishing Point," seen on Friday night, is the dance equivalent of a peaceful, ruminative discussion with a few close friends,

drinks in hand. But that's not to say that it is not serious. Big themes — fate, how relationships evolve, whether sex remains important, how the past is woven into our personal narrative, how we remember the dead — are tackled lightly and deftly, woven into monologues by Mr. Morris (one in the form of an unconventional eulogy) and the quietly mesmerizing Donna Ahmadi.

Those ideas also live through the movement, which varies wildly from dancer to dancer. The Dang-It Bobbys — particularly Kris Bauman, who plays both guitar and banjo, and often wanders into the piece — offer lovely riffs on bluegrass, country and folk music, one form merging into the other, and the choreographers respond as eclectically.

Vanishing Point

Danspace Project

A tender duet for Mr. Morris and Ms. Ahmadi; a wonderfully sensuous off-kilter solo for Tara O'Con; Ms. Willett's warmth and maternal embrace of the other dancers even as she remains essentially alone: all these present images and associations of family, love, solitude and community, even as death (in the form of Mr. Pearson, who crawls out from under the bier) is ever present.

At the end the coffin is revealed to be a terrarium, containing earth and plants. That seems just right for this gentle piece: death may be the vanishing point, but irrepressible life is its theme.