

## 'Dances by Very Young Choreographers'

When Ellen Robbins selects young choreographers for her annual program, she seeks the most creative. But don't expect to see the likes of Christopher Wheeldon or Alexei Ratmansky. Ms. Robbins's choices are more likely to be artists like Isabella Giovannini, Molly Model or Maddy Draper.

Never heard of them? That's not surprising: Isabella (below) is 15, Molly is 13, and Maddy only 9. They are among the 16 participants in "Dances by Very Young Choreographers," part of the Family Matters series at Dance Theater Workshop. But though all have studied with Ms. Robbins, their program is far from a typical student recital.

"I choose the work because of the ideas and the choreography," said Ms. Robbins, who has been organizing these showcases for 18 years. (Anna Sperber and Pele Bauch are two of her "very young choreographers" who have grown into professionals.) "It became important to hold up these examples of work as an inspiration for everybody in the school. It gets things cooking in a nice way."

What these choreographers — ages 8 to 15, and this year all girls — have cooked up offers an intriguing range of flavors. Their three- to four-minute solos, in which they also star, include the humorous and the contemplative, performed to music as varied as jazz, classical, country and western, and, in one case, dripping water.

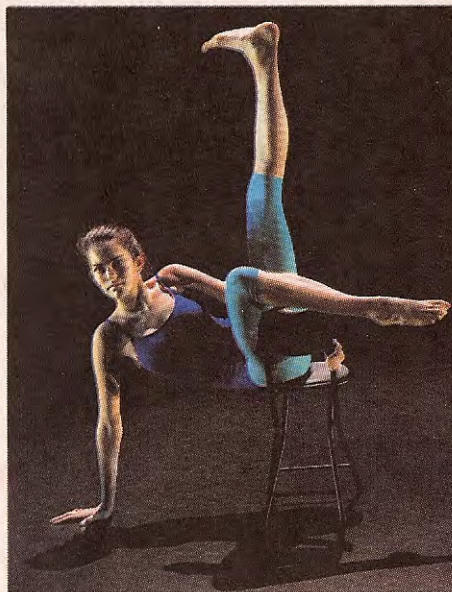
Some are abstract, like Isabella's "Tilt, Slant, Fold," which explores shape to the

sounds of Meredith Monk. Others are narrative, like Maddy's "Sweet Nightmare," a small mystery performed to Stravinsky. Some draw on technology, like Molly's "Pixelated," which uses units of motion and a hip-hop score to suggest a digital world. One work, "The Struggle," by Katja Stroke-Adolphe, 11, the daughter of the composer and music educator Bruce Adolphe (she uses her father's music), addresses a family member's illness.

"This was a way for her to work through her feelings," Ms. Robbins said, "and kind of push away the disease and find hope."

Ms. Robbins said she wanted the 75-minute program to show children the many facets of modern dance and perhaps help them make a leap into it themselves. "Instead of an intermission, I bring the audience onstage and teach them a tiny lesson," she said. "So anyone can see what it's like to dance an idea." (Saturday at 2 p.m.; Sunday at 1 and 4 p.m.; Dance Theater Workshop, 219 West 19th Street, Chelsea, 212-924-0077, dtw.org; \$15; free for children.)

LAUREL GRAEBER



FAYE ELLMAN