

# Boy, Interrupted

By Randy Gener

**Neil Greenberg**  
At the Kitchen  
May 5 through 8

**Neil Greenberg's** astringency is a good thing. His absolute refusal to fall victim to wet grief, self-pity, or polemics creates a distancing effect that broadens the emotional spectrum of *Not-About-AIDS-Dance*. This pungent new 45-minute work for five dancers also exhibits his self-deprecating humor, tenderness, and goosey gravity.

*N-A-A-D* is an "immortality project" about a dance *in progress*—about the haphazard ways the evolution of a piece is disrupted by cruel facts in the universe, about how the road to creation is rife with bumps, digressions, flashbacks, and stark signposts, of which AIDS is one of the most horrifying. Snatches of text are projected, interspersed with movement quoted from the choreographer's previous works like *Stage-Gun-Dance* and *MacGuffin*. "This is the first material I made after my brother died," says the first slide; Greenberg etches spry balletic phrases in which shifts of pace and rhythm are dark, rueful, searching. Jo McKendry's showier variations follow, and so do willowy Ellen Barnaby's; she purposefully dithers a landing.

"Ellen was a big pothead in high school," reads another slide. The piece goes on arbitrarily. Solo dances are incisively intersected

by Christopher Batenhorst's muscular arms and bounding legs. People go and stop, seemingly without reason. They form twisting squares, synchronized phrases converge and diverge from a center, bits from the other works are repeated and modified.

Suddenly, projected names of many dead friends and relatives invade the dance's progress. They feel like blows to the gut.

The stream of text and movement pauses. Greenberg stands before us. He shuts his eyes and pokes a finger in the air. It nudges closer to his right ear. The jabs are infinitesimal. Tenuous. Mysterious. Words flash: "This is what my brother Jon looked like in his coma." The moment is so emotionally tight it takes a while before we remember that *Crux Eruption*, which preceded *Not-About-AIDS-Dance*, was actually a preparation for this. *Crux* ends in ominous shadow play, Greenberg's shadow looming bigger, intimating that he's on the verge of something pivotal in his very self-conscious evolution as an artist.

The turning point in *N-A-A-D* is the public admission of his HIV-positive status. Amid all his dislocation, the dance continues to be a steadying factor. A slide projects his musing: "I wonder if it will work." It does. ■