

DANCEVIEW

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San Francisco Report: Kathryn Roszak's *Danse Lumière*

by Rita Felciano



Kristin Clayton, Hally Bellah-Guther, Kathryn Roszak. Photo: Andreas Guther

Dancer, actress, writer **Kathryn Roszak** founded her **Danse Lumière** (September 25, Hertz Hall, UC Berkeley) in 1996 to more intensively pursue concepts of dance theater that are based on literary (poet Gary Snyder, novelist Maxine Hong Kingston) or scientific (astronomy) sources.

One of her long-lived endeavors, most recently performed at Cal Performances Fall Free for All - a daylong celebration of the arts on the Berkeley Campus - is based on Roszak's immersing herself in the poetry of Emily Dickinson. Intelligent, theatrically effective and emotionally rich, *Pensive Spring* brings to life the complexity of the poetry and the personality of one of America's most intriguing artists.

Roszak assigned Dickinson's character to a singer, an actress and a dancer. She used to take the dancer's part herself but today the role is given to ballet dancer Hally Bellah-Guther with Roszak stepping into the role of the diarist and letter-writer. Soprano Kristin Clayton performed a

selection from Gordon Getty's *The White Election*, a song cycle based on Dickinson's poetry. Getty is a rather conservative composer but these settings display lovely vocal lines and a deft sense for the poetry. Some of them tend toward the operatic - especially as interpreted by Clayton - but others are elegiac or wispy and reminiscent of folk songs. Roszak's choreography - though limited, given the space limitations - responds sensitively to the music's nuances. Bellah-Guther is a tiny dancer most effective in the frolicking passages; her gestures, however, tend to the overly dramatic. Roszak is quite a good actress. The former dancer still moves with considerable grace though her greatest asset today is a beautifully modulated alto voice and immaculate diction. She imbued Dickinson with the sparkle and a wit that is more easily perceptible in her letters than in the poetry. The interaction between the three performers was well designed; "Pensive" flowed with an easy grace.