

# downtown express



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## Dancing while expecting

BY SARA G. LEVIN

To many female dancers, pregnancy looms large as the symbolic ending to an active career. For Jennifer Phillips, who is seven-months pregnant and part of Ellis Wood's dance group, it has opened a new door. She will be performing a six-minute solo, "Pregnant Study #3" this Friday and Saturday, March 24-25, as part of the female troupe's evening-length performance at the Tribeca Performing Arts Center's 2006 Work & Show Festival. In anticipation of opening night, Phillips was happy to describe how her dancing has evolved with her body's changes.

### Why do a dance while pregnant?

As soon as I got pregnant [Ellis Woods] started taking me out of group pieces. A lot of [Wood's] movement is so active, and I could no longer do partnering. I think it was Ellis's idea to start thinking about a solo...to think about how I'm feeling with the everyday changes, coming up with movement that was suitable for my body at that time.

### Did the dance change as your body changed?

That's tricky. I started making the solo back in December. Some of the things I've had to adapt. I've had to try to keep it fresh and alive, but physically try to stay familiar with certain things so my body could keep up with the dance. Since it's a solo, there's a lot of leeway for changes.

### Do you emulate the sensation of being in the womb in the piece?

I think it's more about my emotions, rather than what the baby's doing in there. I started working in December and my father had just died. For me it's about being pulled in two directions, mourning my father's death and expecting this child — emotions that are on opposite ends of the spectrum. I feel like there are some stereotypes, you're supposed to be all light and happy. It's more about ways that you're supposed to face the



Mom-to-be Jennifer Phillips during a rehearsal of her solo dance, "Pregnant Study #3."

world and at the same time wanting to hide from it, the dark and light.

### The piece is called 'Study #3.' Did you do two previous ones?

Ellis also danced while pregnant. She has two children, so this is the third pregnancy in the company.

### Ellis Wood Dance is an all-female troupe. Does that mean all of your dances have a feminist bent?

I think in the end all the pieces are about women and empowering women in some way, showing the range of things that a woman might go through... sides that maybe people don't want to see or aren't pretty. Trying to raise [women] up in a way that sometimes might be overshadowed by men in modern dance.

### Are you worried about the baby kicking or hurting her during the performance?

I notice her movements more when I'm passive. When I'm dancing I don't notice her kicking as much. [In the performance] I'm not doing anything that might hurt her. I myself might pull a muscle, but that's the risk you take as a dancer. I've read and been told that the only way you can really hurt your baby is slamming yourself against a wall! (She laughs.) I'm not doing any rolling on the floor, nothing touching my belly other than my hands. So I feel pretty confident about that. And because I've been dancing so long, I feel comfortable with gauging what I can do.

"Pregnant Study #3" premieres this weekend, the first of Tribeca PAC's 2006 Work & Show Festival, which runs through April 8. All tickets are \$10, and are available at the Box Office, by calling 212-220-1460 or online at [www.tribecapac.org](http://www.tribecapac.org). Tribeca Performing Arts Center is located at the Borough of Manhattan Community College, 199 Chambers Street.