

## *Free-form dancers so casual it's fun*

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By Joanna Baymiller

### **Review**

Contactworks, a four-member ensemble, describes itself as a dance company.

But its performance Friday evening in the Minneapolis rehearsal studios of Ozone Dance Company, showed what this group does could be described as part dance, part mime and part jungle-gym athletics.

All of which is largely improvised and hugely entertaining.

**THE INFORMALITY** of Ozone's rehearsal space proved a perfect place for this group's casual style. Its propless, plotless choreography has a relaxed, playful and accessible style, and the opportunity to sit close to these performers heightened the intimacy, so apparent within the group, to include the audience.

Contact improvisation as a dance form began about 1972. The group calling itself Contactworks first performed locally two years ago, and the current foursome — Patrick Scully, Terri Krusan, Wendy Oliver, and Jay Smiley — has worked together for about a year.

Their performance is highly kinetic, emphasizing body contact. Forces move against masses, and energy is coiled and then released in response to one another. They lean on, fall against, and curl around, over, and under one another, stretching and contracting like free-floating protoplasm.

**THERE IS NO** music. Sound comes from the whoosh of expelled breath, the squeaking of bare feet against hardwood floors and the occasional thud of a heavy landing. It's all extremely athletic and so playful it looks like it could be taking place in a mud puddle.

The group performed four numbers — all improvised, sometimes around a movement idea or a loose story theme — and talked, laughed, staggered, flopped, slithered, quivered, grunted and snorted through most of them. Gravity, the unseen accomplice, was always apparent, as they moved with it more than against it, often hugging the floor. Their concentration also was evident.

**OF THE FOUR** performers, I found Smiley's deft, witty, and finely focused movements the most consistently inventive.

The group will sponsor and perform with another contact dancer, Nancy Stark Smith, at 8 p.m. Friday in the Ozone Studios, 400 1st Ave.

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