

Arts/Entertainment

Contactworks dancing full of energy

By Midg Docken

The constantly rolling, leaping, falling dance group called Contactworks is to the world of dance what Dudley Riggs strives to be to the world of comedy.

Currently performing at the Southern Theatre (formerly Guthrie II), Contactworks bases its dances on improvisational movements. The few choreographed numbers the group performs display a sense of humor that is satirical in nature and has great appeal for the arts-oriented college crowd.

The dancing of Contactworks is not at all cerebral. Instead, it is highly athletic, lightly entertaining and easily accessible to any member of the audience. It doesn't take a great deal of thought to understand or appreciate what the company is doing and you don't have to know anything about dance to enjoy it.

Review

Given those facts, it was surprising to find the audience for the opening performance Tuesday night numbered only 20, most of whom appeared to be either friends of the dancers or local dance aficionados. The company deserves a much broader following than that.

The company members — Teresa Kruzan, Wendy Oliver, Patrick Scully and Jay Smiley — are good at what they do. And what they do best was well illustrated in the final work of the evening, an untitled contact improvisation. This was probably the most enjoyable of the three works they performed, and clearly showed how well this company works together in establishing a focal point for the impetus of their movement.

The earlier works, "Under the Influence" and "You Can't Eat a Yoyo," also were full of energy and fun to watch.

While all four are strong dancers, Kruzan and Smiley are excellent comedians in addition to being the strongest dancers in the group.

Contactworks continues its current offering tonight and Saturday at 1420 Washington Ave. S., Minneapolis. Friday night's offering is a special Easter presentation of "The Mass." Performances are at 8 p.m.

A word of caution if you go (and I suggest that you do at least once). Wear casual clothing. The intimate Southern Theatre, while possessing excellent sight lines, is sadly deteriorating and is shabbier than ever. Also, the air is a little malodorous.

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