

Imaginations Take Form Saturday Night

At P-FHS As Contact Works Performs

Contactworks Review Preston Republican 1979

By Judy Juenger

Imaginations took form Saturday night at the Preston-Fountain High School auditorium, as the Contact Works dance troupe performed contact improvisation for a small group of persons. The four-person troupe was sponsored by South Eastern Minnesota Libraries Cooperating (SELCO), the State Arts Board and Preston Public Library. Contact Works is one of 17 programs being offered to people in the 10-county SELCO region, through an arts programs grant which ends in June, 1980.

Contact improvisation began in 1972 on the eastern coast of the United States. It went across the country and became a big sensation in San Francisco and was only recently introduced in the Midwest. Wendy Oliver, one of the troupe members, said Contact Works began in Minneapolis about three years ago. Contact Works is the only group in the Midwest to perform contact improvisation on a regular basis. This group works out of City Scape Studio in Minneapolis, and has been together for one year.

The four troupe members met in a contact improvisation class, where Oliver said. They learned improvisation, and whatever other dance background, etc. they brought with them, was an addition to the improvisation. Contact Works members spend about four hours per day rehearsing numbers and talking about what they want to work on. Sometimes a general outline is decided upon, but usually the group improvises its dances, which means they make up the moves as they go.

The contact improvisations were highly gymnastic, yet graceful indicating the dance background of the members of the troupe. Oliver and the other woman in the group, Terri Kruzan, have a background in modern dance, and Oliver also has some background in martial arts. One of the men, Jay Smiley, has a 'conglomerate' of dance experience, said Oliver, as well as the other member, Patrick Scully.

Contact Works is a non-profit organization. Scully and Kruzan are movement specialists for schools in Minneapolis, and Oliver teaches contact improvisation to adults at City Scape Studios. Smiley has a job unrelated to the dance company. In addition, everyone takes a part in work at the organization, such as bookkeeping, choreography, etc.

Contact improvisations on December 8 at the high school involved very little sound except for one session dealing with the trials and tribulations of a girl in a grey coat, red



CONTACT WORKS — A contact improvisation troupe from Minneapolis, MN, entitled Contact Works, performed at Preston-Fountain High School Saturday, Dec. 8. Shown here are troupe members Jay Smiley, Terri Kruzan, Wendy Oliver and Patrick Scully. The four met at a contact improvisation class and

have worked together the past year. The group reheases four hours every day. The group was sponsored by Southeastern Minnesota Libraries Cooperating (SELCO), the Preston Public Library, and the state arts board. Republican photo by Mike Erdman

shiny boots, and a pink parasol, who gathered grain in her parasol and tried to get it to the Ukraine, and her dealings with the Secretary of Agriculture Earl Butz. That session was much like children getting together and telling a story, being sure to interrupt each other to add another facet to the story, just for the fun of telling a ridiculous story.

Other contact improvisation skits involved movements to whistling, which changed to windy noises by the men, then into eerie moaning. The dancing by the women changed accordingly and ended in a fast,

improvised dance with hand-clapping.

Although this type of dance was new to most people there, the majority of the crowd seemed pleased with the performance. And what was seen Saturday night will never be performed again—it was Preston's special night. For improvisation deals with the movements of the moment, and what the dancers expressed Saturday will not be what they feel and convey to another audience in another town at another time. It was a premier and a final performance rolled into one.



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