

Intense 'Second Sight' stirs strong emotions

By Rohan Preston
Star Tribune Staff Writer

Kimberly Johnson gets pushed down, stepped on and generally manhandled in Robin Stiehm's "Give/Get/Take," a disturbing and moving 1998 dance euphemistically described in program notes as being "about power inequities in personal relationships."

It is really about abuse, embodied with intense commitment by Johnson and Eric Boone, a taller, chiseled-from-stone dancer who brings a cold menace to his performance.

"Give/Get/Take" is often difficult to stomach: Stiehm's visceral, slap-her-around-like-a-rag-doll choreography goes so deep into the horrors of abuse that it will follow us into sleep. If not for the smiles that the performers allowed themselves when taking their bows Thursday night at the Illusion Theater in Minneapolis, you might expect to read their names in the police blotter.

"Give/Get/Take" is the most evocative section of "Second Sight," an anthology of local dance curated by Jazzdance director Danny Buraczeski that continues tonight and Sunday. Most of the works are searching — and occasionally searing — examples of contemporary dance, though the show concludes on an odd, happy note with a boisterous Romanian peasant number from the Ethnic Dance Theatre.

Buraczeski's own contribution, a work in progress called "Beat," is about elemental questions. To a sometimes muddy sound score by Philip Hamilton and Peter Jones,

Dance review

Second Sight

What: An anthology of dance curated by Danny Buraczeski.

When: 8 p.m. today, 7 p.m. Sunday.

Where: Illusion Theater, 8th floor, Hennepin Center for the Arts, 6th St. and Hennepin Av. S., Minneapolis.

Tickets: \$20. 612-339-4944.

panting dancers move through an array of Judeo-Christian iconography, spreading and falling onto one another as if they were crucified figures falling off crosses.

At the end, they assemble around a steady beam of light and, hands clasped, raise their heads like penitents. Their costumes, by May Hansmeyer, are colored heart red, the kind of broad, humanistic emotion that we get from artists such as abstract expressionists.

Although serious works dominate "Second Sight," ballroom dancers/choreographers Brian Sostek and Megan McClellan are the irresistible delights of the evening. Their "Duets d'Amour," in three snippets scattered throughout the show, are brilliantly witty. The lyrical pair glide, saunter and skip through the stages of love: a dutiful, attentive courtship, with soft touches, followed by a take-her-for-granted carelessness (and a kick in the pants), finally arriving at a forlorn medium.

The dances are bright and



Photo provided by the Illusion Theater
Mathew Janczewski and Susie Bracken perform in "Second Sight," a dance anthology at the Illusion Theater in Minneapolis.

bouncy, suggesting silent-film stars such as Charlie Chaplin and adding needed levity to the program.

The evening includes a preview of Mathew Janczewski's "waterBridge," a theatrical, almost mystical piece about struggle, and "Adan," a bit of flamenco choreography by Susana di Palma. Filling up the Illusion stage, she stomps the floor so hard that her energies ripple through the audience. You get the feeling that there is more there — that with a whip and a little leather, Di Palma could be a dominatrix.

— Rohan Preston is at
rpreston@startribune.com.