

# Workshop Format Brings Freshness In Synergic Show

A Review

By ELIZABETH LEE

If you see something like a rainbow upon which dancers bend and curve stretched over the Durham sky and you hear humming, strumming sounds emanating from each corner of the city, they might have been created by Synergic Theater.

Certainly, if Suzanne White Manning, artistic director, and David Manning, director, had a projector big enough, they would send light images into the night sky. If they had cords and speakers enough to wire all Durham for sound, they might try it.

For the moment, Synergic Theater is working more modestly, but the visions of its participants are undaunted.

**AT THE** Synergic Theater Workshop performance/presentation last Saturday in Duke's Ark, seven participants revealed their individual talents in the portraits, dances, sound-scapes and synergistic combinations they created.

The workshop was designed to foster a creative exploration of sound, light and movement media, which could break down technical and perceptual barriers and synergize new possibilities. Several of the eleven pieces attested to the success of the workshop processes. Arrived at through improvisation and not polished, refined or rehearsed to performance level, the pieces were nonetheless interesting and intriguing.

**THE STRANGE** and unusual prevailed in several works. Bryce Wagner's *A Brief History of the Universe* began in darkness. Only streetlights shone on the floor and against the walls. It sounded like someone was eating. An apple? A soggy sandwich? Munch. Munchy. Suddenly a spotlight illuminated Wagner, scrunched cross-legged under a table, eating. He split perceptions usually experienced as one, made us listen to what we almost never hear, then showed us the source of the sound.

In her solo, *Ann's Introduction*, Ann Deloria made symbols out of everyday objects turned topsy-turvy. A slide projector became a watering can for flowers which didn't sprout. She transformed rolls of paper tape into something she craved, pulling it to her and gathering it up in great heaps. When it fell of its own weight into a wastebasket, she slashed it to pieces with a paring knife. Throughout, she shed layers of unwanted clothing as she embraced a continually changing self.

**ANOTHER** transformation occurred in *The Presence of Talus Indicates That the Scene Around You is Changing*, a solo by Susan Settergren. Attired in a general's cap and jacket, she sat in the center of an elaborate rendering of a military camp in some Asian place. Palm fronds, mosquito-netted lamps, intricate lattice-work and a huge army-green parachute surrounding the whole tableau created a sense of austere dignity. Suddenly, she dove beneath the parachute and her motion under it caused it to ripple and rustle. After a while, she burst from under the front edge, dressed in high heels, skirt and ruffled blouse. Smoothing her clothing, adjusting her purse, she flashed a bright good-morning, time-to-go-to-work, American smile.

**THIS PIECE** was delightful. The incongruity of the set and the action, the understated presentation of the themes, and the risk inherent in making a piece in which the dancer-mover appears only briefly at the beginning and the end are all the sorts of the things which workshops can foster and the drive to performance sometimes inhibits. A fresh lack of self-consciousness characterized the evening.

Synergic Theater premiered in Durham at the US/USSR Summer Arts Festival in 1974 and has returned after four years in San Francisco. It is presently planning performances for Durham and New York City.