

Review/**Dance**

'Terra Incognita,' a Columbian Triptych

By JENNIFER DUNNING

Synergic Theater combined slides, light and shadow play with dance and music to create three views of the New World discovered by Columbus in "Terra Incognita," presented on Monday night at the Pace Downtown Theater. The triptych opened with "Pasos," a new work created by David and Suzanne White Manning, the directors of Synergic. The least convincing of the pieces, "Pasos" offered a portrait of Martín Alonso Pinzón, the captain of the Pinta, who according to program notes raced back to Spain in hope of claiming the discovery of America as his. On the evidence of the piece itself, Pinzón was a first-class, relentless whiner — a sort of Salieri to Columbus's Mozart.

Clearly, a good deal of research, imagination and work went into this ambitious but sometimes cluttered evening. "Pasos," for instance, draws

on old Catalan frescoes and the sardana, a traditional Catalan dance, for atmosphere and a sense of history. But Mr. Manning's script is jarringly peppered with Spanish words and anachronisms, and the choreography by Mrs. Manning that is performed in front of the shadow screen does not add anything.

The projections and shadow theater that are the heart of Synergic productions were at their most magical in the haunting second section, "Lost," an extended conversation between John White, governor of the first British colony in North America, on Roanoke Island in North Carolina, and his granddaughter Virginia Dare. Figures seek each other futilely through thick forests and along majestic shorelines. Nothing is quite real in the one-dimensional world of shadows and projections, which here include projected paintings by Mrs. Manning, but in "Lost" the viewer is

pulled into that overwhelming world. And there is considerable visual wit to the sequencing and juxtaposition of images on the screen.

Two spunky heroines link spirits in "I, Migrant," the story of Maggie, an Irish immigrant, and her granddaughter Maggie, a child of the 1990's born after her death. The impudent political and social commentary is a little pat, but the two Maggies are believable and charming.

Mayumi Ohshima operated the lighting for "Terra Incognita," which was performed by R. P. Brink, Laura Fernandez, Tom Fountain, Marie-Christine Giordano, Charles Navarrette, Elena Lopez Sans and Sima Wolf. Taped narrative and commentary was provided by Fermi Reixach, Neville Aurelius, Margaret Chapman, Janett Pabon, Krishnamurti and the delightful O'Mara Leary, with additional art work by Brian O'Leary.