

Synergic Theater

David Manning & Suzanne White Manning,
Co-directors



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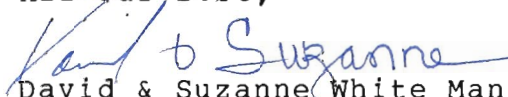
If you keep this dollar half, it's worthless. If you send it back to us, it's worth a dollar. Is this some new kind of chain letter?...blackmail?...extortion? Not exactly. It's more like a matching fund campaign. We have the matching half so your \$1 contribution is assured...if you send your half back.

Are we crazy? Perhaps. But we're betting the bottom of our bank account that many of you will further increase the value of your contribution by also including a check. In turn, we can make that check go a long way. Every dollar we raise goes directly into supporting Synergic Theater workshops and performances. Through a magical combination of desperation, innovation, and the participation of people like you, the Synergic Theater gets a great deal out of limited resources. A summary of last year's, this year's and next year's activities is on the other side.

As Anna Kisselgoff put it in her glowing New York Times review last September: "The freshness of the Mannings' work is rooted in their independence. They are not part of the established downtown scene, but their work is no less experimental." Our audience and students keep telling us that the Synergic Theater offers them a renewed sensibility toward life. That's very gratifying because that's what we think art should try to accomplish. But these are difficult times for small arts organizations -- to remain fresh and independent, we need your continued support. (Last year, 25% of you contributed!)

Your matching dollar halves, plus checks made out to the Synergic Theater, can be returned in the enclosed pre-addressed envelope. (Occasionally, the post office won't deliver mail even with postage, so please also add your return address.) And yes, your donations qualify for non-profit IRS deductions. Thank you.

All Our Best,


David & Suzanne White Manning
Co-directors, Synergic Theater

DANCE: History in Motion, by the Mannings, C17.

The New York Times

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 12, 1988

Review/Dance

A Manning Double Bill

By ANNA KISSELGOFF

David Manning and Suzanne White Manning collaborate on mixed-media theater pieces with a strong dance component. "Lost," which concerns the 16th-century English colony that vanished from Roanoke Island, and "Old Stones," inspired by Romanesque churches in Catalonia, make up the typically original program they will be presenting again Thursday through Saturday.

Saturday night's performance at Schimmel Center for the Arts at Pace University (Spruce Street between Park Row and Gold Street), was marked by a brilliant integration of live dancers and shadowplay techniques. This breathtaking technical feat allowed visual and verbal metaphors to move pungently and effectively between the real and the imaginary, from personal experience to commentary on human behavior.

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Often, their pieces stem from their own experiences. A teaching stint in Barcelona spawned "Old Stones." Anyone who has seen the Romanesque churches and frescos in both Spanish and French Catalonia will recognize how well "Old Stones" captures the spirit of timeless strength in these monuments.

The piece however, has its startling moments. The six women who initially bend to resemble rocklike

clumps against a screen (a slide of a church in a poppy field) rise and pose as Romanesque saints and disciples of Christ. Suddenly, one figure is stoned. Judas's kiss at that point has been mimed fleetingly. Only later is it seen on a slide of a fresco. Cello recordings by Pablo Casals add a rich dimension to the stream of flowing images. Lynn Anderson, Alyssa Bonilla, Malin Eklund, Katy Matheson, Pia Sidetun and Nancy Putnam Smithner were the dancers.

Mr. Manning, who wrote and directed "Lost," is obviously not interested in neat conclusions; a layering of images makes his point. Part of his text in "Lost" is drawn from the letters of John White, who was the grandfather of Virginia Dare, the first English child born in the New World. The figure of Virginia (seen as a frolicking shadow behind the screen or against images of Roanoke, N.C., beaches) is then identified with a modern pop singer and, by extension, today's "lost" woman.

The overall commentary in this revised version of an earlier piece is still obscure — especially after the Mannings raise a provocative theme. And this has to do with the fact that White decided to search for Spanish gold rather than return to Virginia Dare and the colony at the scheduled time. When he did, all were "lost" forever. This is the inadvertent betrayal that should be the central trauma of the Mannings' surprisingly emotional work. The cast, expert in timing, included Robert Johnson, Ms. Matheson, Ms. Bonilla and Ms. Anderson.

Last year -- with the help of individual contributors, a small grant from Samuel H. Scripps, several credit cards, and a lot of donated studio and theater time from Pace University -- the Synergic Theater presented an entire summer-long season in New York, including June performances, July workshops, and a two-week run at the Schimmel Center for the Arts -- Pace's 600-seat downtown Manhattan Theater. Both concerts featured premieres of major new works. We also presented a three-week intensive workshop in January.

Next fall, we will present another major performance series at the Schimmel Center's Pace Downtown Theater. The concert will have a pre-WWII theme, featuring Suzanne's critically-acclaimed (its true) "Private Lives", David's "The Fool" (a new version that premiered last June to very enthusiastic audience response) and the premiere of a new 20-minute shadowscreen work: "Return to Ellis Island", which will take a personal look at the relationship between our contemporary journey and the lives of our immigrant foreparents. For this production, we have been awarded a grant from New York State Council on the Arts' Decentralization Funds that will help fill some of those 600 seats in the Pace Downtown Theater through a pre-paid ticket distribution project that will provide access to people who wouldn't otherwise attend.

Meanwhile, work continues on "Found", a feature-length shadowscreen work based on the discovery of the New World that will premiere in 1990 and continue to be developed and presented through the 1992 Columbus Quincentennial. Drawn from sensory-level 15th-century impressions, "Found" will ultimately pose the idea that the New World is yet to be discovered. This is the biggest project Synergy has undertaken in its 16-year history. The primary movement/image/sound research will be done in Spain and we are already working with Spain 1992 at the Spanish Consulate and the Pace Downtown Theater at the Schimmel Center. Participation is pending from Duke University's Institute of the Arts and the NEA Inter-Arts Program. Several other major funding sources have expressed interest and will be coming to review next fall's concert, so please help us ensure that concert's success.