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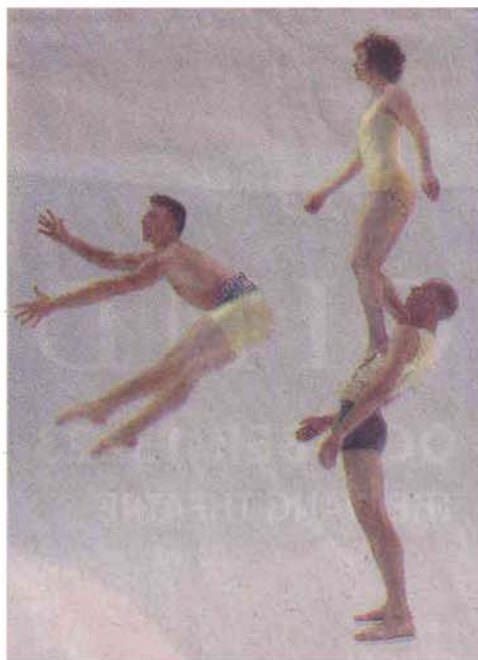
Snappy's 'Lumen' is acrobatic standout

By Karen Campbell
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As Snappy Dance Theatre has matured, the company has become more diverse, with works ranging from abstract miniatures to nearly full-evening dramatic presentations. But the pieces that tend to be the most satisfying are those that mine what this talented troupe is best known for: sculptural acrobatics in fluid motion, celebrating the beauty of form and the dangerous edges of balance. That aesthetic is epitomized in Snappy's new "Lumen," a company collaboration created with lighting designer Joseph Levendusky and directed by artistic director Martha Mason.

There is no underlying narrative here, no sociopolitical statement, no colorful characterizations. "Lumen," performed Wednesday night at the Boston Center for the Arts' Calderwood Pavilion, is simply a gorgeous interplay of vivid lighting and beautifully toned bodies in near constant motion.

The work opens with a single pool of illumination in which Bonnie Duncan ever so carefully walks all over Tim Gallagher. She walks up his back as he slowly rises from a prone position, steps gently over his shoulders, and then delicately continues down the front of his body as he bends backward to lower himself to the ground. It's a breathtakingly simple and effective moment. But as Wim Mertens's propulsive, minimalist score takes off, other spots and sprays of light dot the stage, and soon seven dancers are cavorting in and out of the shadows.



PHOTO/LIZ LINDER

Dancers Kyle Deschamps, Bonnie Duncan, and Tim Gallagher in "Lumen."

In a second section, Bess Whitesel's lovely solo of stretches and convoluted twists is backed by a chorus of three couples in sharp silhouette. When the stage lighting changes to a hot red, they become dancing flames. With a shift to a pale gray-blue, they become ghost images flickering across a screen. Just before the blackout ending, they are captured mid-flight by a single brilliant flash — a snapshot memento.

At the other extreme is Mason's darkly humorous but uneven "U.S. Fried." As Duncan and Whitesel emerge from an imaginary television

set to accost Gallagher, portraying a couch potato, the soundtrack rattles on with pointed messages about food disorders, consumer glut, and capital punishment, as well as the clever song "Will to Fail," with the lyrics "I'm secretly enjoying myself while slowly I'm destroying myself."

Three short premieres by company members add depth to the program. Duncan's competent if routine trapeze solo evokes a bored farm girl messing around at the top of an apple tree. Kyle Deschamps's fluidly muscular solo is a burst of bravura athleticism. In "Revolutionary Small Talk," Deschamps and Roger Fernandez face off as confrontational commuters,

Snappy Dance Theatre's Snappy South (End) Move

At: Boston Center for the Arts'
Calderwood Pavilion,
Wednesday night (through Sunday)

a spunky teen and a businessman, respectively. But as they challenge each other, their one-upmanship slowly turns to camaraderie. They seem to find more commonalities than differences.

The first half of the program is a new, shorter version of the company's Edward Gorey-inspired "The Temperamental Wobble." This series of vignettes could still use some judicious pruning. The company has great fun with Gorey's eerie images — the walking tombstones, and the widow who dances with her shadow. The expressive Duncan is delightfully crafty and petulant as an innocent child caught between warring parents. And Mason soars in some acrobatic derring-do in a trio of mustachioed, skirted umbrella toters. In the end, however, all the vignettes don't add up to a particularly convincing picture.