

Dance

A Wrinkle in Time

A dance queries what our eyes say is true

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Once I knew something about the parallels between Buddhist thought and contemporary physics, but I never could have imagined a dance like Donna Uchizono's *Thin Air*, which, she said in an interview, stemmed from the idea that "the world as we know it doesn't exist in the way that we see it." There aren't many choreographers these days who'll climb as far out onto a limb as Uchizono does in this astonishing work.

Thin Air plays tricks on our perception and our sense of time. The virtual and the real party together. As the piece starts, we see Michael Casselli's video images of Hristoula Harakas, Antonio Ramos, and Julie Alexander projected onto the front curtain. When the curtain rises, there "they" are—sitting atop ladders exactly behind the spots their ghosts first occupied. Later, three narrow, transparent sheets of plastic scroll down, and as the two women roughly paint the back sides of their panels white, their video selves materialize on the now reflective surface. (The fact that Ramos, hampered by a too-small brush, can only paint little designs on his panel and create a face by whitening his nipples and belly button is one of *Thin Air's* several nice jokes.) Eeriest of all is the sequence in which Harakas again sits on a ladder and her virtual self is plastered onto her three-dimensional, breathing one, slipping in and out of sync just enough to make it seem as if her face is melting.

For a long time, the performers occupy their red ladders, initially lit by Jane Shaw so that only their jiggling heads are visible. You could go crazy watching those heads, but after a while, when it seems that the three may do this all night, you stop seeing them as human bobblehead toys; Alexander is nodding, Ramos circling, Harakas making tiny figure eights. You take note of interruptions—a pointing finger here, a slump there. You listen to Fred Frith's atmospheric music get fuller and louder, then fall silent. You greet as a major event the crumpled, translucent plastic sheet unrolling along the floor toward us like a wave hitting a beach.

Every small, detailed action is compelling, even when it draws duration out far enough to promote boredom in the faint of heart—Ramos, pushing the flooring into new wrinkled terrain; Harakas and Alexander, side by side, executing tidy, cleverly designed little steps that call to mind a Slavic folk dance. When Harakas flings a leg high or Ramos swaggers, suddenly and briefly a saddle-sore cowboy, I'm quietly thrilled. Seventy-five minutes? Really? It felt like half that.