

# STUART PIMSLER DANCE & THEATER

THEATER FOR THE HEART AND MIND

Stuart Pimsler and Suzanne Costello  
*Artistic Co-Directors*

*"Choreography with exquisite abandon. They reveal the urgency of expectation and the vulnerability that comes with a bared soul."*

- Minneapolis, Star Tribune (2009)

[www.stuartpimsler.com](http://www.stuartpimsler.com)

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**Stuart Pimsler Dance & Theater (SPDT)** is a nationally-recognized performance company that has been co-directed by Suzanne Costello and Stuart Pimsler since its inception in 1979. In the U.S., SPDT's work has been presented at The Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, Dance Theater Workshop (NYC), Central Park's SummerStage, Jacob's Pillow, The American Dance Festival, and the National Civil Rights Museum, among many others. International presentations have included Canada, Europe, Israel, Taiwan, and Russia. A highlight of the company's 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary included an international tour sponsored by the Bermuda Ministry of Culture.

SPDT has been a Twin Cities-based performance company for over 10 years. The company's singular and elaborate work has garnered critical acclaim for its ability to situate highly physical, emotional vocabulary within stunning theatrical landscapes. In these imagistic worlds, SPDT creates poetic stories focused on love, loss, and the need for connection. SPDT's gifted company of performers and collaborating designers continues to realize a signature vision of "*theater for the heart and mind*".

The company has twice been presented by the Guthrie Theater, Minneapolis. *The Ends of Love* was commissioned in 2007 for the inaugural season of its new space, and invited back in 2009 to present *Tales of Longing* over a two-week run. In 2006 Dancing Wheels, the first stand up/sit down company in the U.S. commissioned a new SPDT work, *Big Trucks and Leverage*, for both companies which was premiered to critical acclaim in Cleveland, Ohio. The company's *Undercovers*, commissioned by Pathways, was presented at the Illusion and featured as part of a PBS documentary, *Dance in the Dark*, broadcast throughout the 2007-2008 viewing season. SPDT received a 2008 SAGE Award for Outstanding Performance for its recent work, *Ways to Be Hold*.

SPDT's *Community Connections Programs* reach a diverse array of audiences both locally and nationally. The company's outreach programs have prompted The Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts to cite it as a "national model" for its ability to be inclusive of a wide range of cultural groups (*Learning Audiences*, 1997). SPDT has been honored to serve as the resident company at F.A.I.R. Downtown, a WMEP fine arts interdisciplinary school located in Minneapolis. At FAIR, SPDT was responsible for the school's dance curriculum including teaching junior and senior high school students in the areas of dance techniques, choreography, and history. Every year, SPDT's *WASH*, Working with Artists, Sharing the Healing, brings together artists and caregivers in focusing on the connection between creative expression and personal health.



**STUART PIMSLER**, selected by *CityPages* as Twin Cities “Artist of the Year” in 2004, is celebrating his thirtieth year as Artistic Co – Director of SPDT. His work has been honored with Choreography Fellowships from the McKnight Foundation and the National Endowment for the Arts as well as a Major Fellowship and six Individual Fellowships from the Ohio Arts Council. Mr. Pimsler has been commissioned by the Guthrie Theater, the Lila Wallace Arts Partners Fund, National Performance Network Creation Fund, the Jerome Foundation, the Wexner Center, University of Minnesota, the Walker Art Center, among others. Mr. Pimsler's first children's play, *My Grandmother's Tsochbkes; Tales of a Gambling Grandmother* had its national premiere in March 2010 at SteppingStone Theatre, St. Paul.

Mr. Pimsler holds an A.B. in English from Franklin & Marshall College and has a J.D. from Catholic University School of Law. He was admitted to the New York State Bar in 1975 and the following year was accepted as an M.F.A. Fellow in Dance at Connecticut College. His mentors have included Martha Myers, past Dean of the American Dance Festival and past Chair of the Dance program, Connecticut College, and Daniel Nagrin, whose solos *Spanish Dance* (1948) and *Word Game* (1968) he continues to perform.

As cultural activist, Mr. Pimsler has served on the Board of Directors of Dance/USA (1990-97) and the Steering Committee of the National Performance Network (1992-95.) In October, 2005, Stuart Pimsler founded the SAGE Awards for Dance which are an annual celebration of outstanding dance achievements in the Twin Cities community. He co-coordinates the yearly event with Dana Kassel. [www.sageawards.org](http://www.sageawards.org)



**SUZANNE COSTELLO** joined SPDT in New York City in 1979 and became its Artistic Co-Director in 1984. During her career with the Company, she has been highlighted as a performer, choreographer, teacher and rehearsal director. As SPDT's Director of Education, she has coordinated the Company's yearlong residency at FAIR/ Downtown (2009-2011.)

Ms. Costello's choreographic work has been honored with three Individual Artist Fellowships from the Ohio Arts Council and has been commissioned by national dance companies and individual artists. In the recent past she has directed and choreographed *CATS* for Broadway at Iroquois, Louisville; *Go, Dog, Go!* for Metro Theater Company, St. Louis, and Stage One, Louisville; and choreographed *Grimm Tales* for Children's Theatre, Minneapolis. She has also been a guest artist at numerous colleges and universities throughout the U.S. and abroad. She has been a Sage Cowles Land Grant Guest Artist and an Affiliate Faculty at the University of Minnesota.

In New York City, Ms. Costello performed with several companies, including Billy Siegenfeld & Dancers and David Gordon Pick Up. Co. She has continued her association with Mr. Gordon, who has set a number of works on SPDT. Recently she worked with colleague Joe Goode in San Francisco who created a new solo for her, *Movie Star Life*. Ms. Costello first began her study of dance at Washington University, St. Louis where she graduated with a B.A. in Dance.

## What the Presenters Say. . .

“That evening was truly a magical and emotional experience...” Jay T. Hairston, *Baldwin Wallace College*

“...I highly recommend Stuart Pimsler Dance & Theater for a school residency. The Company’s artistry will bring a new energy to your school, your students and your staff.” Sally Krisko, *Fort Hayes Career Centre*

“...your work with the Fairmont High School Wrestling Team was one of the most rewarding experiences I have encountered. Even though it has been four months since the end of the program, I still reflect on the possibilities we have developed in working with sports teams and opening new avenues for athletic training in Kettering.”

*Connie Campbell, Rosewood Art Centre*

“...You have presented two programs for us that were directed to senior audiences. The wondrous thing is that you understood that senior audiences are audiences as any other. You did not play down or condescend. You were not afraid to confront and to shock, and as a consequence you engaged your audience and made them respond on a level beyond passive entertainment.”

*Pauli Greenberg, Heritage Village*

“The five residency events during the week provided a fine forum for our audience members to learn more about the interlacing aspects of dance, theater, movement, and music. Here is an artist who truly helps us all to see our culture in new way.

*Maureen Masters, University of Dayton Arts Series*

“I was most impressed by the company’s interaction with students of all ages - how the dancers were able to get them to respond verbally and with body movement. It was fascinating to observe young students using creative thinking skills and express their feelings.”

*Wayne Markworth, Centerville City Schools*

“The residency you and your company did at Bryden Elementary School was outstanding. Your energy, enthusiasm and creativity, together with your natural teaching ability, made for an exciting two weeks.”

*Jon Curry, Bryden Elementary School*

“The Performance was superb, but what made the week so special was the series of workshops and ‘happenings’ that built the momentum and enthusiasm for the culminating performing experience. Your visit had the qualities of a short residency - perhaps too short, but wonderfully rich. The broadest range of students profited.”

*Ted Aub, Hobart and William Smith Colleges*

“The hallmark of the Company is Pimsler’s sensitive, witty and evocative choreography...the work itself is extraordinarily compassionate.”

*Phyllis Bleweis, University of Florida*

“They were loved by the students. I found their work probing and entertaining at the same time, done and performed beautifully.”

*Jim Malcolm, The Colorado College*

## What the Critics Say. . .

“Fulfillment, Rage, Gentility and Mourning... Mr. Pimsler was as persuasive in his lamentations as he was in his jests”

Jack Anderson, *New York Times*

“Stuart Pimsler is a tremendously intelligent choreographer. His lush, complex and beautifully performed works leave behind an emotional vapor trail.”

Camille LeFevre, *Minneapolis Star Tribune*

“The Pimsler Company is known for capturing with humor and compassion the spectacle of every day life.”

Michael Casper, *Columbus Art*

“A performance by Stuart Pimsler Dance & Theater is real life experience in a dream.”

Charlotte Lowe, *Tucson Weekly*

“This is a choreographer with a pricked conscience and a bared soul.”

William Littler, *The Toronto Star*

“With an auspicious Kennedy Center debut...Pimsler has established a mode that is distinctly his own.”

Alan M. Kreigsman, *The Washington Post*

“You wonder how much more inventiveness Pimsler can pull from his choreographic hat.”

Donald Rosenberg, *The Plain Dealer*

“The former New Yorker is a master of physical comedy, interlacing spoken text with rhythmic movement that speaks volumes.”

Camille LeFevre, *Minneapolis Star Tribune*

“So effectively do the performers pull us into the emotional world they create.”

Elizabeth Zimmer, *The Village Voice*

“In its acknowledgement of loss, its existential questioning and its search for comfort where it can be found, *Swimming to Cecile* is a profoundly moving work.”

Suzanne Levy, *The Washington Post*

# CURRENT REPERTORY



## Tales From the Book of Longing

Premiered at the Guthrie Theater on October 8th, 2010.

Inspired by the poetry of Leonard Cohen and the music of Antony and the Johnsons, *Tales from the Book of Longing* unfolds in an episodic landscape of sinuous moments out of reach and quiet scenes of missed chances. This evening length work weaves its way through a world of frayed relationships teetering on the edge of change.

Music: Antony and the Johnsons, Otis Redding, Carla Bruni, Anouar Brahem, Philip Glass, Henryk Gorecki, Ethel, Neverwas, Michelle Kinney, and Giya Kanchelli

*“when we say a work is ‘adult’ we usually mean it contains nudity, or that it’s depressing. But Pimslers’ work is adult in another sense: full of the vivid and complex emotion of adult life”*  
-Lightsey Darst (MN Artists)



## Ways To Be Hold

Honored with a 2008 Minnesota SAGE Award for “Outstanding Choreography”, explores the dynamic of holding and being held filtered through a series of personal and global inquiries. The entire company is caught between moments of tenderness and assault as they decide how to respond in dangerous times. Spoken word artist Tiyo Siyolo narrates this compelling work with courage, grace and a ferocious spirit.

*“Ways to Be Hold is a searing portrait of empowerment, fear and struggle set to elegiac music of Ross Edwards. An intensely fascinating and disturbing experience, it was danced with generous flair by the exceptional Pimslers Company.”*  
- Donald Rosenberg, Cleveland Plain Dealer.



## The Ends of Love

(2007) *The Ends of Love*, which was commissioned by the Guthrie and conceived, written and directed by Stuart Pimsler, offers an abridged history of love and relationships filtered through the wisdom and candor of a nine-year-old boy.

Set in an imagistic world of emotional movement and intimate dialogues, *The Ends of Love* muses on love, lust and loss from youth to old age, while referencing works from Plato's *Symposium* to Nicole Krauss' *The History of Love* to Jonathan Safran Foer's novel *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*. The full-length performance features seven dancers and four musicians, including composer Michelle Kinney playing cello, as well as a video component which plays throughout the piece.

*"In this new theater and dance piece," "the work of Stuart Pimsler Dance & Theater can be passionate to the point of electrifying and at other times intimate, delicate and humorous. The subject matter of The Ends of Love is a perfect match for the virtuosities of this company."*  
- Michael Bigelow Dixon



## Total Surrender

Total Surrender takes its title from a poem by Rumi while considering the possibility of a "mighty peace" rather than conflict. The first rehearsal for Total Surrender began on September 11, 2001 and evolved as a daily journal, chronicling Mr. Pimsler's response to a changed world. The accompanying musical score, *Peaceable Kingdom*, was created by nationally recognized composer Ingram Marshall.

### *Zero Circle* by Rumi (1207-1273)

I. Be helpless, dumbfounded,  
Unable to say yes or no,  
Then a stretcher will come from grace  
to gather us up.

II. We are all too dull-eyed to see that beauty,  
if we say we can we're lying.  
That No will behead us.  
And shut tight our window onto spirit

III. So let us rather not be sure of anything  
Beside ourselves, and only that, so  
Miraculous beings come running to help.

IV. We shall be saying finally,  
With tremendous eloquence, Lead us  
When we have totally surrendered to that beauty,  
We shall be a mighty kindness.

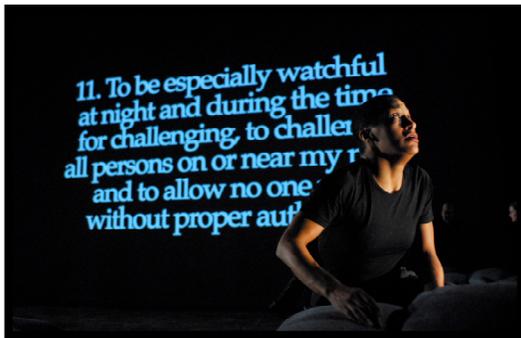
*"A work that grows more complex and  
profound with each viewing"*  
-Star Tribune



## The Men from the Boys

A comic/tragic exploration of male rituals and relationships. A contemporary gladiator confronts a figure of authority in a work with a most unexpected ending.

*"Pimsler fashions a pas de deux for the two men that blends wrestling take-down moves with pseudo-balletic lifts and turns, a brilliant...analogy."* The Pittsburg Press



## Sentry

SPDT's original scenic designer and visual coordinator Ronald Aiji Kajiwara suggested the initial idea for this work. Aiji brought a photograph to our studio of a young, Lebanese soldier who lay wounded in a hospital bed. Most of the photo was black and white but behind the young man was a window stuffed with pastel colored sandbags. The beauty and the horror of

this image struck Aiji. This was the inspiration for Sentry.

At the time this work was created, Ronald Reagan was in office. The U.S. was not at war, although Reagan warned of the potential global dangers of renegade countries acquiring nuclear arms. Although we had not performed this work in a number of years, the current political climate inspired us to bring this work back into the repertory.

*"One of the most powerful anti-war works to be seen in a long time"* -New York Times



## Rooms of Disquiet

Rooms of Disquiet unfolds as a mysterious dream shared by seven characters intersecting each other's lives. The origins and partial dialogue for this work spring from the short, short stories of Franz Kafka who created a world of lust, craving and loneliness. This is SPDT's most cinematic work, which has been performed in both traditional venues as well as site specific settings.



## Joy

An autobiographical portrait of "An Artist as a Young Jew." Through movement and conversation directed to imagery relatives in the audience, Mr. Pimsler describes his childhood in New York City, growing up to become an attorney and eventually emerging as Artistic Director of SPDT.

*"If he wants yet another career, Pimsler might consider stand-up comic. In this work, he is Columbus' answer to Woody Allen."* The Columbus Dispatch

# PRESS

## The Star Tribune

Sunday, February 13, 2011 by Caroline Palmer

### Dance work Explores love, battle of sexes in time for Valentine's Day

What is love, anyways? Pop star Howard Jones sang this question in the 1980's, but its been asked repeatedly by philosophers, artists and just about anyone who has experienced the joy - or misfortune - of being in love. Of course, there's no east answer. Perhaps people just enjoy pondering all the possibilities, which explains why "The Ends of Love" by Stuart Pimsler Dance & Theater is such an emotionally engaging work.

Commissioned by The Guthrie Theater in 2007, "Ends" returns to Minneapolis' Southern Theater this weekend, in time for Valentine's Day. Drawing upon influences as diverse as Plato's "Symposium" and the Nicole Krauss novel "The History of Love," the work delves into the exquisite messiness characterizing relationships and ergetically explores all of the passion, pettiness and peacefulness to be found there.

Onstage narration by Pimsler's son Gabriel, who's now in the eighth grade but also appears on the video at a younger age, adds a layer of innocent perspective. "Love can turn our life upside down," he states. And here it literally does as the dancers soar and stumble through their encounters with one another, propelled by a tonally rich composition from Michelle Kinney, joined by live musicians Park Evans and Jacqueline Ultan.

"Ends" encompasses two halves, one defined by raw feeling, the other by contemplation. Early on, Brian Evans, Kari Mosel, Cade Holmseth and Roxane Wallace-Patterson dive into duets literally churning with sensuality. The fervent tone shifts into a different gear as the performers engage in a battle of the sexes, poking fun at the irreconcilable Mar/Venus divide and devolving into a clothes-ripping party scene followed by a riotous Greek Chorus.

Tenderness, reconciliation and a sense of love's mystery underscore the second part of "ends". Here we see Pimsler and Suzanne Costello slow-dancing in a bathtub, Holmseth's quiet ballet near the rafters using aerial silks, a delicate dance with eggs, a lush solo from Heather Klopchin, a recital of fears (rational or not), and even a playful regression to childhood crushes.

Throughout "Ends" there's talk of the first emotion, "Whoa!," which was followed by "Wow!" Such simples words can speak volumes. And so can an evening of dance, especially when performed by the likes of Pimsler, a keen observer of humanity's contradictions, and his gifted company.

# DANCE MAGAZINE

November, 2009

**By Linda Shapiro**

In Stuart Pimsler's *Tales From the Book of Longing*, seven performers attempt to capture the elusive ache of yearning. More tone poems than narratives, the 15 vignettes excavate intense emotional states. Screens manipulated by the dancers create a shifting landscape that both conceals and reveals their conflicted seeking. The sophisticated sound design (by Neverwas) mixes poetry by Pimsler and Leonard Cohen with music ranging from the soul sounds of Otis Redding to the spooky folk-based vocals of Antony and the Johnsons.

\_A familiar postmodern ambiguity pervades much of *Tales* as fragmented gestures beg for interpretation. An embrace, for instance, can suggest passionate engagement, aggressive maneuvering, or fragile hope, sometimes simultaneously. Equally familiar is the sweeping, breathy flow of classic modern dance, rapturous spills of movement fraught with the tension of unresolved relationships.

\_But too often *Tales* leaves us grasping for significance in a roiling sea of charged images.! A section to Redding's classic "These Arms of Mine" yields plenty of slashing, wheeling arms and clutching hands. But the dancers' scalloped undulations never really ground into the bluesy texture of the music or mine its melancholy. Throughout the performance, signature poses assume a vague emotional weight. Dancers balance tentatively on one leg, gazing intensely at the floor. Are they lingering? Remembering? Regretting? While dance lends itself to layered intentions, many of these *Tales* need a more rigorous connection between expressiveness and form.

\_Pimsler's skill in shaping dance dramas is most apparent in several multifaceted duets. With a queasy mix of animal playfulness and menace, Laura Selle Virtucio pounds Brian Evans's chest, gently butts him with her head, straddles him, holds him, circles him warily. It's as if she's experiencing both the intensity of their passion and its disintegration. Likewise, Evans and Cade Holmseth grapple in slow motion embraces suggesting both the sculpted elegance of Greco-Roman wrestling and the ghost of an erotic encounter.

\_A sly duality infects a scene between Pimsler and his longtime life and artistic partner Suzanne Costello. As he advances toward her, gesticulating and muttering gibberish, she calmly orchestrates his tumult by saying things like, "Be a little less funny, yeah, just a little sad. But not too sad." It's as if a verbose Samuel Beckett character came striding into a carefully calibrated Harold Pinter drama. Here are individuals engaged in a witty and sinister power play that seems both highly personal and universal. As in all of these evocative duets, the actions are highly engaging.

mnartists.org

Features, In Performance, Performing Arts

## **What the Heart Wants**

October 7, 2009

Lightsey Darst

**Lightsey Darst gives a glimpse into the underpinnings of Stuart Pimsler Dance & Theater's new production, "Tales from the Book of Longing," which investigates the adult complexities of want, desire, and yearning.**

**TO BE ADULT IS TO KNOW BETTER.** You are not going to get everything you want; you are not going to get an answer. You are special to someone, but not exactly in the way you wanted to be. You cannot go back, you cannot skip ahead. You will not be completely understood. There is no such thing as a perfect understanding -- there is not even any constant quantity to understand.

And yet -- to be adult is to want these things more deeply than when one really believed in them. To be adult is to have perfected the power of wanting, to long with a whole body and its nuances, with a history and its revelations and lies, to throw -- to not be able to help throwing -- that entire strange paradox called the self into one's wish.

Stuart Pimsler has ideas about wanting. His 2007 piece, *The Ends of Love*, mused on desire; now, with *Tales from the Book of Longing*, the new Stuart Pimsler Dance & Theater show (which opens at the Guthrie Oct 8 and runs through Oct 18), he's turned to longing. What's the difference? Ask him, and he unrolls a little taxonomy. "Longing has a history, where desire is in the moment," he says. Desire is "a more general human condition," while longing is specific, individual, focused on a remembered experience or place or person or, even, taste -- Pimsler cites the famous madeleine passage from Proust's *Swann's Way* as inspiration. But do we long for the actual substance of the past? Or do we, in memory, change what we long for, embroider it, glorify it? If we had what we long for, would it satisfy us?

Pimsler doesn't pursue this through a single narrative or a unified symbol system, but as the title suggests, through a series of "tales," vignettes unified by the theme of longing.

Off balance, the dancers swirl. They pursue each other around a space divided by thin folding partitions, almost like the scattered pages of a book, each covered in scrawl. I can't make out the writing -- well, *almost* that line -- but is it trivial or heartfelt? That one stroke makes the difference, but it's all blurred, like a letter left out in the rain. Or is that a drawing -- of a tree -- a house --?

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The pages move, pushed from behind, closing in on a dancer or falling lightly on top of another. At times, the pages stand between two dancers. They can't see each other, but I can see both, their hands caressing the surface between, like Pyramus and Thisbe.

One dancer runs behind a page, and another I didn't know was there runs out. My eye wants the first one back, but I can't help following the new one. They all look so young, in constant motion, clutching and flinging and abandoning each other, headlong. It's hard to keep track of them, but even in their whirl, I sense that one remains hidden, constant.

ENCOUNTER PIMSLER AT DIFFERENT STAGES in a project and he'll talk about different elements. Early on, he talked about the poetry of Leonard Cohen (from which Pimsler drew his title), then it was the music of Antony & the Johnsons (that high wailing trembling voice). Then these two influences (both so right in their experienced longing) were absorbed, and Pimsler was fascinated with Joe Stanley's set design -- those large, lightweight "pages" that conceal or close in on dancers, cutting up space and sightlines to leave the viewer wondering and wanting. A few weeks before the show, Pimsler has digested it all and is at the core of the work, at the center of the question. *Tales from the Book of Longing* is an experience for the viewer, but it is also, for Pimsler, a way of investigating.

And Pimsler doesn't erase one investigation for the next; he builds, so that each new show also contains a record of the past enthusiasms of his curious mind. A line, a move opens a little window into some deep encounter that Pimsler just touches on now. (He has nearly thirty years' worth of SPDT's past to touch on.) "I enjoyed not knowing about the feelings of A, B, C, or D," he says in a voiceover, referencing for a second the French *nouveau roman*. Or, he'll pick up a past work of his own in a single note. These references, even if you don't catch all of them, feel like rhymes -- slant-rhymes, though, that never close the meaning down, but keep opening it out.

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*Emotional movement, with its object removed, is the core of the dance. Gestures of reaching, sweeping away, clinging, suffering, or enjoying unfurl, free of purpose but richly resonant.*

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A scrim of people stand between two dancers -- accidental, mindless, like strangers waiting for a bus. Their faces register nothing. The two dancers move around the others, not quite aware of each other, uncertain of their own purpose. The woman bends into a stately *grande plie*, then relaxes into a slouch of waiting. But as they cross through the line of strangers, the man sees the woman. As the dance ends, he crosses through to her, as if about to speak.

I wince when dancers speak. It's not only that words cut into the otherworldliness of dance, destroying the fantasy of identification and bringing us back to ourselves; it's also that dance-makers and dancers tend not to be very good at writing and delivering text. It's not their training.

But SPDT is different. I hardly ever feel that they are "dacting" (a friend's pejorative term for dance-acting) -- partly because the performers are so practiced in text and theater that they can speak or even sing convincingly, and partly because Pimsler's texts are art, too. Emotional movement, with its object removed, is the core of the dance; gestures of reaching, sweeping away, clinging, suffering, or enjoying unfurl, free of purpose but richly resonant. Just so, Pimsler strips a text to its desires, so that what's left doesn't narrow down to a single meaning, but opens out with the elliptical resonance of poetry.

"So you are there and I am here -- waiting, still, but moving." Who couldn't have said this at some point, in one of a hundred situations, all of which spring open with the voiceover?

Words are important not only to the company's performance, but to their process. During rehearsal, Pimsler coaches Roxane Wallace through an impulsive dance in the shrinking space of a closing flat. First, he's just adding a word or an idea here or there -- "More with your upper body." But then, as she starts to get it, he talks constantly, turning his directions into a song that accompanies her dance: "You're doing the same thing -- don't even look at it -- now get smaller and smaller..." The words move the dance forward; it's as if he's telling her the thought she wants to create for the viewer.

Pimsler stages that very process in a short, strange tale. He walks across stage, speaking to himself in a non-language, sometimes whispering, sometimes singing, while a voice from offstage coaches him. Enjoy yourself, she tells him, make it funny, and he laughs. "But then it's not so funny -- maybe it's a little sad," she says, and he weeps. "Say it closer to us," she commands, and he bends towards us, intimately. "And now tell us the end of the tale," she says. "That's good. Keep talking" -- and she leaves him, still talking in his own language.

What can you make of this? I'm not sure which is stronger: the fantasy of being understood (even in a private language), or the fear of being misunderstood. Pimsler's work is like this -- multiform meanings, specificity and ambiguity, all in a dreamlike mix -- except that it's not so much dreamlike as it is realistic. Think of a past moment, a past love: does the memory have a meaning? Or is it more like this "tale," pulling in two directions at once?

When we say a work is "adult," we usually mean it contains nudity, or that it's depressing. But Pimsler's work is adult in another sense: full of the vivid and complex emotion of adult life.

In voiceover, a speaker promises himself, "And if I can translate what I know about you, you will be revealed, at last." We know it's a dream, this idea of total revelation, of complete seeing. But it's no less compelling for that.

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"Tales From the Book of Longing" by Stuart Pimsler Dance & Theater.  
**New love-themed dance-theater work inspired by  
Leonard Cohen poetry wears heart on sleeve.**

**By CAROLINE PALMER, Special to the Star Tribune**

Much has been written, said, sung -- and danced -- about the ways of love. It's among the most complex of human experiences, marked by exhilarating highs, devastating lows, haunting desire and, more often than not, ordinary moments. Stuart Pimsler Dance & Theater explores all of these aspects in "Tales From the Book of Longing" at the Guthrie Theater.

The work, inspired by the poetry of Leonard Cohen, unfolds with the sort of heart-on-the-sleeve quality of a troubadour's love song. This approach yields mixed results. At its most effective, "Tales" offers up passion, lush imagery and generous movement. Some sections leave a more indelible impression than others, however, and the dramatic through-line meanders at times, mainly because the overall dynamic could benefit from more shades of expression.

"Tales" begins with a song. Brian Evans has a rich, warm voice, and he uses it to set the mood for a rugged emotional journey. Onstage, movable flats designed by Joe Stanley resemble pages of a journal - an old one with a weathered sepia-tone marked by fleeting thoughts and streaked with tear stains. These pages continually shape the space within which the dancers engage one another. Sometimes they trap or pin the performers -- Suzanne Costello even emerges from one -- and it feels like the words come to life through the artists' intimate interactions.

The dancers approach the choreography with exquisite abandon. They reveal the urgency of expectation and the vulnerability that comes with a bared soul. Evans and Cade Holmseth perform a tender duet with elements drawn from wrestling. Kari Mosel, Laura Selle Virtucio and Roxane Wallace-Patterson swirl around and up against the pages as if trying to find answers. In the penultimate section, the men catch up the women as they move -- releasing sounds of surprise, shock, joy. Midway, Pimsler (who serves as the poet within the work) tries to communicate using a foreign language. Costello urges him to be happier, sadder, to sing his words. He obliges, providing an almost-vaudevillian scene of self-deprecation which signals that "Tales" could use more moments of levity to temper its gravitas. When it comes to love, even the most serious among us sometimes plays the fool.

dance

# Seeking truth in physicality

● Stuart Pimsler Dance & Theater will premiere "Ways to Be Hold" and bring back the popular "The Ends of Love."

By CAMILLE LEFEVRE  
Special to the Star Tribune

**T**alking about this weekend's premiere, "Ways to Be Hold," choreographer Stuart Pimsler said, "It all started with a headlock."

Pimsler recounted how he and members of his company, Stuart Pimsler Dance & Theater, were playing around with headlocks one day in rehearsal, "and I became fascinated with how [they] can change from being playful to violent." Pimsler had also become attuned to news of beheadings and images of detainees with their heads hooded. After test-



V. PAUL VIRTUCIO

"Ways to Be Hold" started with headlocks in rehearsal, "how [they] can change from being playful to violent," Stuart Pimsler said.

ing out some word play — be- ated a political work on "how  
head, beheld, behold — he cre- we let ourselves be held, and

**STUART PIMSLER DANCE & THEATER**

**What:** Two weekends of new and old work.

**When:** 8 p.m. Thu.-Sat., 7 p.m. next Sun. Ends March 30.

**Where:** Ritz Theatre, 345 13th Av. NE., Mpls.

**Tickets:** \$18-\$22. 612-436-1129.

what holds us back from commenting on or doing something about the way other people experience that."

Pimsler's no stranger to movement-as-commentary. His 1984 "Sentry" (which the New York Times called "a powerful antiwar dance"), is also on the program. "There's a truth in physicality, even in a single gesture, that cuts through verbiage and gets to the essence of things," he said.

Also on this program is a new solo for the company's co-artistic director Suzanne Costello created by SPDT performer Vanessa Voskuil.

The following weekend, Pimsler reprises last year's sold-out show "The Ends of Love," an almost myth-like work of enduring love and hard-earned intimacy that's been expanded and now includes three new company dancers: Kari Mosel, Marciano Silva dos Santos and Brian Evans.

The run, Pimsler said, allows people to see new work the first weekend, then check out "Ends" for a first or second time the next. "It seemed like a good time to try two different programs."

Camille LeFevre is a Twin Cities dance critic.

**ThisMonth**

DANCE

**Dance That's Different**

Stuart Pimsler Dance & Theater offers something for the heart and mind.  
By Lightsey Darst

**W**atch Stuart Pimsler Dance & Theater and you know you're seeing an extraordinary company. What makes SPDT different?

First, there's the work: dance and acting, moments of lyrical beauty and clever repartee side by side. Company founder and coartistic director Stuart Pimsler (his fellow artistic director is his life partner, Suzanne Costello) calls on the specificity of the spoken word or the immediacy of dance, depending on "what needs to happen next."

Second, there's the company. It's one of the most diverse in the Twin Cities—not in ethnicity (the company has one African American, Roxane Wallace), but in body type and performing character. "[SPDT is] a company of seven soloists," says Pimsler. "I'm not interested in a look." Pimsler chooses performers who bring "richness" to the company, whether it's Vanessa Voskuil's mystery or Laura Selle's sensuous strength. The creation of SPDT's work is a communal endeavor, so "[it requires] somebody who really likes to dig in and participate," he says.

SPDT's communal approach also re-

flects the company's extensive outreach. The company is dedicated to "theater for the heart and mind," so even as the dancers explore new subjects, Pimsler wants the dancing to relate to ideas and issues he feels "passionate" about.

What he feels passionate about right now is *The Ends of Love*, a new evening-length work he's creating for this month's show. For this piece, Pimsler explores "how we are constantly searching for our own completion in one another"—in other words, love. This performance anchors SPDT's twenty-fifth anniversary season—the company moved to Minneapolis in 2001—but Pimsler looks more toward the future than the past. Twenty-five years is a milestone, but not a stopping place for Pimsler, who's brimming with ideas and energy. "It's just that really wonderful time of making work," he says. "I feel really lucky."

**Feb. 15-18.** Dowling Studio, Guthrie Theater, 818 S. 2nd St., Mpls., 612-377-2224, [stuartpimsler.com](http://stuartpimsler.com)

Reach Lightsey Darst at [lightseyd@msn.com](mailto:lightseyd@msn.com).



V PAUL VERTICHO



## A choreography of community work

### Bold movements from US dance theatre troupe

By Scott Neil

An innovative US-based dance theatre company that performs its own thought-provoking alternative look at how the US night have responded to the events of 9/11 rather than going to war has arrived in Bermuda.

The company will work with stroke survivors and healthcare workers, students and seniors during a packed week of events that culminates in a public performance next Sunday.

The Stuart Pimsler Dance Theatre Company was invited to Bermuda by Community Affairs

Minister Dale Butler after he met them in New York at the start of the year.

Students at CedarBridge Academy have been given a taste of what is to come after the company showed a variety of short segments from their repertoire, including their 9/11 piece.

Mr. Pimsler explained: "The Minister was very interested in what we were doing. We are going into the community to work with various segments of the population while we are here.

"We will be working with healthcare providers and present diversity workshops. We pride ourselves in doing community work with many, many different kinds of people."

When they meet healthcare providers this week the dance theatre company will talk about and demonstrate alternative ways that can be used to keep themselves healthy through movement, he explained.

During a series of performances that will include tomorrow's Harbour Nights on Front Street and the opening night of the Bermuda Music Festival at Dockyard, the company will perform dance and story-telling to connect with audiences and deal with a diverse range of topics from love to the aftermath of the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the US.

Students at CedarBridge Academy watched the 9/11 performance, which focused on the grief caused by the terrorist attack and gave a different option on what the US response might have been. Mr. Pimsler said not everyone in the US believed the country had made the right choice by going to war as its response to the attack. He continued: "We want to show students that art can be part of everyday life. One of our pieces is about the aftermath of 9/11 and in it we question the response to those events." A number of groups will benefit from the group's week here, which culminates in a public performance at CedarBridge on Sunday.

PHOTOS BY DAVID SKINNER



Actress in bloom: Vanessa Voskuil takes part in 9/11 piece.



Diverse topics: Roxanne Wallace looks over her colleagues from the Stuart Pimsler Dance Company as they perform a 9/11-inspired dance performance at CedarBridge Academy.



Stretched to the limit: Stuart Pimsler Dance Company yesterday.

Saturday  
MAY 10, 2003

# Star Tribune

NEWSPAPER OF THE TWIN CITIES

Metro  
Edition

www.startribune.com

## Pimsler dancers are flawless in three lush works

By Camille LeFevre  
Special to the Star Tribune

For his dance company's 25th-anniversary program, Stuart Pimsler has assembled a program of three lush, complex and beautifully performed works. Imbued with intriguing and elusive poignancy, they leave behind an emotional vapor trail. The four-member Stuart Pimsler Dance & Theater, which grows to six when Pimsler and his wife and co-director Suzanne Costello join the cast, flawlessly embody their dance characters. Lighting, costumes, music and text seamlessly support — even enhance — each work's choreography and emotional undercurrent.

The premiere, "Rooms of Disquiet," features a disparate cast of characters who move through each other's rooms while speaking of uphill streets, a birthday, walks under a full moon, horses and locking doors. Pimsler and local playwright Kira Obolensky wrote the text, incorporating

### Dance review

#### Stuart Pimsler

**What/Who:** Stuart Pimsler Dance and Theater, 25th anniversary concert.

**When:** 8 p.m., Saturday-Sunday, 3 p.m., Sunday.

**Where:** Southern Theater, 1420 Washington Av. S., Minneapolis.

**Tickets:** \$19. 612-340-1725.

snippets from Franz Kafka. The eclectic score comes from Leonard Cohen, Anouar Brahem, Mary Ellen Childs and others.

Matt Jenson is perfect as the geeky writer. Roxane Wallace yells under her light bulb in exhausted anger. Vanessa Voskuil is part Louis XIV figurine, part Kabuki dancer as she reaches elastically through her jerky, angled movements. Laura Selle recalls Laura from Tennessee Williams' "Glass Menagerie" as she places glassware on a shelf, breaks a vase and pulses with bent-over twisting movements. Costello and Pimsler are a married couple with secrets.

Like textural threads, the characters and their stories start to interweave, creating an expressionist fabric that draws

the viewer deeper into the characters' mysterious alliances. Unfortunately, the piece suddenly ends with the ringing of a telephone, leaving the fabric unfinished and the threads frayed in the imagination.

In its local premiere, "Islands" also has a mysterious quality, but reaches a more satisfactory conclusion. With a rigorous ecstasy, enhanced by the religious-sounding harpsichord and vocal music by Klaus Nomi and Popol Vuh, the dancers fling their arms, toss their hair and twist their torsos as they jerk across the floor, their feet stuck to squares of cardboard — a material out of character with the piece.

It's easy to forget this quibble, however, as the dancers — their arms quietly brushing

forward and back — occupy their squares like game pieces on a deconstructed chessboard.

It is fortunate that Pimsler reprises "Total Surrender," a work inspired by Sept. 11 that grows more complex and profound with each viewing. Eschewing polemic simplicity, the work gets its dynamic from embedded opposites: struggle and release; systematic chaos; a horrific expression attached to a tender movement; heaps of dead who come alive. Falling debris clatters around the dancers, followed by what looks like white feathers. Actually, they're white cloths, with which the dancers cover their faces and walk — stoically and frighteningly, arm in arm — in unison.

*Camille LeFevre is a St. Paul writer.*

## Humor, intelligence mark Pimsler dance concert

By Donald Hutera

Maybe Stuart Pimsler Dance & Theater should come with a warning: Dance purists and admirers of virtuoso technique, look elsewhere. But you'd have to include the following qualifier: Fans of multidisciplinary performance, put across with skill, sensitivity, humor and intelligence and focusing on the stuff of real life, call the box office now.

Pimsler, a New York Jew by birth, and his partner, Suzanne Costello, a Catholic-raised St. Paulite, have jointly run the company for about two decades, mostly from their base in Columbus, Ohio. On the evidence of their production at the Southern Theatre this weekend, Ohio's loss is Minnesota's gain.

Pimsler and Costello make tasty meat-and-potatoes dance theater with gently whimsical, emotionally moving garnishes.

Community-oriented work is one of their aesthetic pillars. In "Stories of Who We Are," that translates into an amalgam of movement, music and text at the service of subjects such as family, relationships, love, hostility and mortality.

Pimsler begins with a parade of slides of his and Costello's respective families and their religious backgrounds, accompanied by some very funny narration.

Pimsler has been compared to Woody Allen, minus anxiety. That makes the somewhat feisty Costello his Diane Keaton. Together with vocalist Madeline Rivera (who contributes a sublime aria from "Samson and Delilah"), they produce a comic meditation on the differences that bind us to our loved ones.

In a similar vein, the whole-

### Dance review

#### 'Stories of Who We Are'

- **Who:** Stuart Pimsler Dance & Theater.
- **Where:** Southern Theatre, 1420 Washington Av. S., Mpls.
- **When:** 8 p.m. Saturday; 2 p.m. Sunday.
- **Review:** Pimsler and Costello make tasty meat-and-potatoes dance theater with plenty of gently whimsical, emotionally moving garnishes.
- **Tickets:** \$17. 612-340-1725.

some, talking dance duo of Matt Jenson and Laura Selle share a deceptively off-the-cuff routine.

Conceived and directed by Pimsler and Costello, it features a disarming editorial comment by 7-year-old Sophia Pimsler, who graciously informs us that this man "Jenson" is not sexually attracted to women. This piece transcends its initial spate of autobiographical self-indulgence to hit accessible heights of universal experience.

"Interlude 1" is a charming bit of connective tissue for Pimsler and Sophia in which the child smoothly duplicates her father's every easy move.

"Saba" (Japanese for rust), is a wordless dance of trust making beautiful use of four volunteers recruited earlier from the audience.

In "The Men From the Boys," Pimsler and Jenson mine serious laughs out of the imaginatively violent interaction between a wrestler and his coach.

—Donald Hutera is a Minneapolis freelance writer.



In "The Men From the Boys," Stuart Pimsler and Matt Jenson get plenty of laughs out of the imaginatively violent interaction between a wrestler and his coach. It's one of several dance pieces that make up "Stories of Who We Are," which is being performed by the Stuart Pimsler Dance & Theater at the Southern Theatre.

Photo by Eric Savlitis

# The Washington Post

## Dance

### Pimsler's Mix of Dark Spells

By Alan M. Kriegsman  
Washington Post Staff Writer

Stuart Pimsler calls his troupe Stuart Pimsler Dance & Theater, and though there are obvious elements from both arts in his pieces, the works do not quite belong to one or the other category but form an idiosyncratic amalgam. He's not the first choreographer to explore this domain—Meredith Monk and Martha Clarke come quickly to mind—but Pimsler has established a mode that is distinctly his own.

The company, now numbering five—two men including Pimsler and three women—has twice performed at Dance Place in recent seasons; last night's concert at the Terrace Theater, as part of the Dance America series, proved an auspicious Kennedy Center debut.

Pimsler, born in New York City, got turned on to dance in Washington, where he was attending law school at Catholic University. He founded his troupe in New York in 1978, and after five years moved it to Columbus, Ohio. The group takes its theater involvement seriously, having performed plays by Beckett and Pinter as well as conventional dance recitals.

Pimsler's pieces employ such theatrical trappings as evocative props, decor and lighting, as well as occasional spoken material. But he's more of a

caster of spells—and a very effective one—than a storyteller. Drama, and dramatic situation and conflict, are strongly implicit but seldom specific. Watching Pimsler's work is rather akin to seeing a movie sans soundtrack: Viewers are obliged to imagine a script that seems a plausible complement to what they see in the way of movement and gesture.

The movement itself, stressing pulls, twists, reachings and mimetic gesture, is limited, but Pimsler is very good at composing it into convincing wholes, fueled by long-range dramatic rhythms that conjure suspense, anticipation and surprise. And he's much aided by performers—Suzanne Costello, Kathy Carbone, Brenda Divelbliss and Phillip Whiteis—who burrow deeply into a work's innards and sustain a taut ensemble feeling.

A highlight of last night's program was the premiere of "Hymn of Two Embraces," conceived and directed by

Pimsler and Associate Artistic Director Costello, with original music by Ingram Marshall performed live by the Maia Quartet (in residence at Peabody Conservatory) and visual elements by sculptor Carol Parker. From a movement standpoint the work is a tapestry of clasplings, clutchings and flying lifts—a portfolio of embraces and their aftermaths, set to the extremely poignant string music of Marshall, mostly of a grave, psalmodic character akin to the idiom of Arvo Part.

It's the theatrical accouterments that give the work its haunting mood and aura, such things as a tall platform atop which a woman is seen through

the black veiling of a draped parasol; the dancers' uniformly black garb, extending also to the Maia players, who become participants in the dance itself; a woman on the floor weeping uncontrollably; the wan sound of a Schubert lied that recurs like a gnawing memory; and a lighting scheme accentuating shadows and hallucinatory dimness.

The prevailing atmosphere is somber and elegiac, even deathly—the black veiling is but one hint among many. There is one extended contrasting passage, in which the music turns vivacious and accelerates, and the dancing features leapfrogging and life-asserting jumps. Typically for Pimsler, the sundry shades of embraces suggest no history or moral; they are simply emblems of assorted passions, longings and desperations. Despite its elusiveness, the work draws one powerfully in toward its brooding center.

Also on the program were "The Men From the Boys," a mordantly comic duet on the theme of domination, earlier seen at Dance Place; Daniel Nagrin's impressionistic solo "Spanish Dance," dating from 1948 and puissantly performed by Pimsler; and a splendid 1987 ensemble piece, "Islands," with exceptionally pungent music by Klaus Nomi and Popol Vuh,

# Dayton Daily News

Dayton, Ohio, Saturday, Sept. 28, 1991

The First Cox Newspaper

## Haunting work closes dance troupe's show

By Terry Morris

DANCE CRITIC

Stuart Pimsler Dance & Theater is both eloquently direct and mysteriously alien. Although it would be simpler and more pleasant to talk about the one aspect, no description of this company in performance can be complete without at least a stab at the other.

The six-member troupe from Columbus was both, and repeatedly so Friday night, during a four-part program at the University of Dayton's Boll Theater that brought to a close a week-long residency on campus.

The concert began with the engaging straightforwardness of Pimsler's solo *Joy*, in which he shows and tells how he found his way from childhood to the freedom of dance via the restrictions of law school.

It ended with the night's powerful experience, a haunting work for three women called *Swimming to Cecile* that eludes definition despite suggested meanings and waves of repeated movements for one woman alone and two together.

Dedicated to the choreographer's late mother and enacted inside a swimming pool empty of water, it may be about a loved one's disintegration and passing.

It's definitely about the helplessness of falling when there's no one to catch you, and how it is to keep getting back up when the next fall

### DANCE REVIEW

is inevitable. And it's about wanting to be there to catch someone else when they fall, although the realization finally comes that the inevitable can't be reversed.

Sad, beautiful and reaching out at the end, it featured Janet Parrot as the lone woman, with Suzanne Costello and Janet Slifka as the two. The music is by John Adams.

Spoken words are part of all four works that were performed. But instead of amplifying or explaining the action, which might be either reassuring or uninteresting, the language seems to operate independently for SPDT. At times, words are like a switch that sends a train down a different track without interruption. What seems an obvious truth fades into the distance as another idea takes shape.

That's true in rapid-fire fashion of Pimsler's *The Men from the Boys*, in which a uniformed wrestler in protective gear and an authoritarian figure in street clothes keep trading places when it comes to giving and receiving orders. It's also true to a less disturbing extent of Costello's antic but not empty spoof of beauty pageants, *White Girls*.

SPDT doesn't fit in any standard category of dance. Sometimes there's very little dance to speak of. But there's always lots to talk about afterwards.

# The Columbus Dispatch

SATURDAY, APRIL 20, 1991

## DANCE REVIEW

# Pimsler's new work stimulates imagination

Columbus audiences know the Stuart Pimsler Dance & Theater company almost exclusively through its dance programs. The company flexes its other arm this weekend as a major attraction of Ohio State University's "A Pinter Festival: An International Meeting."

Pimsler, founder and artistic director of the small troupe, was commissioned by OSU and several local philanthropies to create a work for the festival, which honors British playwright Harold Pinter. The new piece, *Pausing in the Avalanche*, was premiered last night at OSU's Thurber Theatre.

*Pausing in the Avalanche* is Pimsler's adaptation of Pinter's play, *A Kind of Alaska*. The play, in turn, is based on the book *Awakenings* by Dr. Oliver Sacks that since has been made into a hit film.

The Pimsler company begins its program with a performance of the Pinter play and ends with its own adaptation, offering an unrelated (at least in the specific sense) repertory piece by Pimsler, *The Men From the Boys*, in between.

The only unfortunate aspect of this arrangement, from my standpoint, is that I was unable to see the entire world premiere.

Pinter parcels out information like a miser. The performance of *A*



BARBARA ZUCK

### AT A GLANCE

- Stuart Pimsler Dance and Theatre in "Pimsler Honors Pinter."
- 8 tonight, Thurber Theatre, Drake Union, 1849 Cannon Dr. Tickets are \$12. Call 644-8425.

*Kind of Alaska*, directed by Pimsler, flourished a little too many Pinter pauses. It moved too much in real time, as opposed to stage, and the pacing, even for this playwright, became, somewhat ironically, soporific.

At least there was plenty of time to consider Pinter's meanings and messages. And Janet Slifka, as the woman who greets the world with her eyes open for the first time in 29 years, gave a strong performance.

In his adaptation, Pimsler uses

movement, dance and spoken text from the play, hanging his work on the skeleton of the original. The set is a striking re-arrangement of the elements of the set used in the play.

If he accomplishes nothing else, Pimsler has made a convincing argument for the evocative powers of non-verbal communication in *Pausing in the Avalanche*. The mysteries of sleep, the confusion of wakefulness, the vulnerability of the sleeper — all these subjects were addressed poignantly in just the opening minutes.

Where the play holds its cards tightly to its chest, Pimsler's new piece stimulates the viewer's imagination. It made for a thought-provoking contrast.

Barbara Zuck is Dispatch music and dance critic.



File photo

Stuart Pimsler dancers in *The Men From the Boys*

# The New York Times

## Review/Dance

### *Fulfillment, Rage, Gentility and Mourning*

By JACK ANDERSON

With a combination of movement and speech, Stuart Pimsler Dance and Theater examined some of life's absurdities on March 1 at the Bessie Schönberg Theater. Most of the company's comments were witty. All were deftly timed.

Mr. Pimsler reminisced in "Joy," a solo in which he confessed how, as a young man, he was drawn to dance, yet felt shy about devoting himself to it. Nevertheless, his increasing confidence suggested that he was now doing what he wanted to do.

His humor turned savage in "The Men From the Boys," in which he portrayed a fatuous therapist leading a sensitivity-training session in which

he told Tim Talty to savor an imaginary orange. Suddenly, the roles were reversed and Mr. Talty ordered Mr. Pimsler to eat the hair off his own head. The two men grew increasingly violent, competing like rival athletes and tormenting each other. The dance ended with what appeared to be a murder. Yet all the mayhem could have been only the fantasy of either the analyst or the analysand.

Suzanne Costello's "White Girls," the one work not by Mr. Pimsler, was a comic portrait of four young women in elegant white gowns. Janet Slifka, Romy Noltimier, Janet Parrott and Ms. Costello preened and were almost prissily polite. Their gentility was a facade. These damsels were

really struggling outrageously in some sort of beauty contest. Morally, however, none of them deserved an award.

Mr. Pimsler turned serious in "Swimming to Cecile," a touching tribute to the memory of his mother. Ronald Aiji Kajiwara's set resembled a swimming pool, and Ms. Parrott, Ms. Costello and Ms. Slifka made swimming gestures and struggled to support one another to a solemn, but blurred, recorded melody by John Adams that sounded like "Onward Christian Soldiers" played underwater.

Near the conclusion, a clergyman's voice was heard praising the healing miracles of Jesus. But no miracle intervened to keep the women afloat on the stormy seas of existence. Choreographically preaching that life was unfathomable, Mr. Pimsler was as persuasive in his lamentations as he was in his jests.

# The Washington Post

## Dance

### The Pimsler Introspection

By Suzanne Levy  
Special to The Washington Post

As a teenager, Stuart Pimsler thought of himself as "a black man trapped in a Jewish body." It seemed only Pimsler knew—that despite his short stature and the cha-cha lessons in the basement—deep down he, Stuuie, was really cool.

In "Joy," one of the works presented Saturday at Dance Place, the choreographer uses such autobiographical details to explore the idea of personal transformation. Although "Joy" is a *cri de coeur*, Pimsler is able to mine the comic possibilities in the situation of a Jewish lawyer (trained by priests at Catholic University law school) who turned himself—late in life, and by sheer force of will—into a modern dancer. The boy who was urged by his father to dance to become "more socially desirable" ultimately became a dancer because he "wanted to leap with grace."

"Joy" is the meaning of his Hebrew name, yet Pimsler screams out that what he really is is "angry and alone." While he learns self-determination through his art, he shows that his identity is hard-won and under continual attack by family and society. All of Pimsler's work resonates with the pain of this self-knowledge.

Pimsler, who made his first Washington ap-



BY TERRY LINTNER

Stuart Pimsler Dance & Theater in "Swimming to Cecile."

pearance at Dance Place last year, was brought back for this appearance under National Performance Network sponsorship. Based in Ohio, the company is officially known as Stuart Pimsler Dance & Theater, and the use of dialogue, props and sets is integral to Pimsler's choreographic vision.

In the heart-chilling "The Men From the Boys," Pimsler also deals with cultural stereotypes—those that push males into violence and competition as the acceptable means of self-expression in our society. Even dying—which Pimsler and company member Tim Talty enact as extravagant movie clichés repeat-

ed over and over—turns into a contest to see who can do it with the most brava-do. An Astaire-esque duet gradually comes to include wrestling holds and moves, which the younger character recognizes as motiveless malignity. His own frustration with the pointless cruelty leads him—ironically but inevitably—into violence himself.

In "Swimming to Cecile," Pimsler again uses autobiography as a starting point, but here the specific is transformed into a universal vision of grief and redemption. An homage to his mother, who died when Pimsler was 15, "Swimming" uses the metaphoric possibilities of water as a medium of both support and resistance, and for its inference of both the safety of the womb and the dangers of drowning. Set in designer Ronald Aiji Kajiwara's wonderfully evocative suggestion of a swimming pool, the work also features an otherworldly, haunting score by John Adams. In its acknowledgment of loss, its existential questioning and its search for comfort where it can be found, "Swimming" is a profoundly moving work.

Also on the program was Associate Artistic Director Suzanne Costello's "Common Gardens," a work reminiscent of Paul Taylor's "Cloven Kingdom" in its suggestion that the heart of darkness lies just beneath the veneer of social trappings and formal manners.

# The Times

Thursday, April 5, 1990

## Pimsler Dance group a talented ensemble

By Kevin P. Murphy  
Times Correspondent

MUNSTER — The Stuart Pimsler Dance & Theater group appeared in a special one-evening performance at the Center for Visual and Performing Arts, in Munster, on Saturday, March 31, 1990. The program was made possible under the combined sponsorship of the Northern Indiana Arts Association and Indiana Bell, with additional support from Arts Midwest and the Indiana Arts Commission, with funding from the National Endowment for the Arts.

The program consisted of four works followed by a "talk piece" - a scheduled discussion with interested members of the audience.

I won't attempt to explain the individual works, because my meanings and yours might be quite different and still would be legitimate responses to the works of art as we each had experienced them. Having said that, I will say some things about them that we might all agree on. The use of lighting and vivid colors to support movement, and to provide deeper meaning than would movement alone, were fascinating, and I felt as though my eyes were taking some appropriately prescribed vitamins. Those effects were particularly noticeable in the first work, "Common Gardens," and the final work, "Swimming to Cecile."

The second work, "Joy," was more obviously autobiographical than were the others. It was vaguely reminiscent of Woody Allen, but Woody Allen with a more positive outlook than we tend to associate with him. Aspects of the piece were

mildly embarrassing, the risk we run when one of us reveals himself more rapidly than our time together may justify. The work seemed to be aptly titled, in any case.

The dance group consisted of founder and Artistic Director, Stuart Pimsler, Assistant Artistic Director, Suzanne Costello, Romy Noltmier, Janet Parrott, Janet Slifka and Tim Talty.

Watching this talented ensemble perform reminded me of classic Grecian sculptors with their love for the human form. There is beauty in the moving sculpture of well-trained, graceful human forms, as was most particularly evident in the fluid movements of performers in the third work, "The Men from the Boys," and in "Swimming to Cecile."

I am glad that we stayed for the "Talk Piece." Although I have danced when the script demanded it, I have usually felt about as natural in that work as a tank attempting to fly. Thus, I have less knowledge of dance as an art form than I should have. The discussion helped me to focus my thoughts, and to compare my reactions to those of others in the audience, and of the performers themselves. It was both informative and supportive. I would be much more willing, another time, to experience such a program than I had been prior to the Pimsler group's appearance. It also seemed that such experience would benefit stage actors immensely. The movements of the body can be helpful indicators of emotional state. The actor who can use his body to convey appropriately the inner state of his character has a powerful set of tools at his disposal.



# The Pittsburgh Press

Vol. 106, No. 270 Twenty Five Cents

SATURDAY, MARCH 24, 1990

Final Edition 3

## Stuart Pimsler adds comedic touch to dance

### REVIEW

#### Stuart Pimsler Dance & Theater

Choreographers: Stuart Pimsler, Suzanne Costello  
Where: Eddy Theatre, Chatham College, Shadyside.  
When: 8 tonight.  
Tickets: \$16, 355-0330.

#### By Lynne Conner For The Pittsburgh Press

Choreographer Stuart Pimsler's voice is at once as intimate and as universal as a comedian's; his dances are a quirky blend of modern dance movement, stand-up comedy and slapstick gags filtered through a dusty, often wistful filter.

His company, Stuart Pimsler Dance & Theatre, opened last night at Eddy Theatre before a half-house.

The evening progressed from the straightforward to the enigmatic, beginning with Pimsler's "Joy." This movement biography features an amusing monologue in which Pimsler addresses an unseen Aunt Gertie, who serves as a kind of confessor.

Subtitled "Portrait of the Artist As a Young Jew," the piece asks familiar questions about the choices life offers and the regrets and/or joys that the "right" choices provide.

Pimsler's physicality is impish

and engaging, and his big, expressive face and charming voice serve the comedy well. And though Pimsler's monologue doesn't have quite the density or literary power of Stephen Daedalus', it manages to hold its own. (Roll over James Joyce.)

"The Men From the Boys" leaves the evening's most intriguing after-taste. A study in male behavior, this duet features some evocative movement and text that explore the ways in which competition can border on sadism.

Pimsler dresses himself in a suit and performer Tim Talty in wrestling gear, thus separating them and simultaneously suggesting differences in age, class, educational level, etc.

But he wisely does not flesh out these differences, leaving the piece mostly unexplained on the narrative level. On the visceral level, however, everything is quite clear.

The piece features one of the evening's most inventive movement sequences, in which Pimsler fashions a pas de deux for the two men that blends wrestling take-down moves with pseudo-balletic lifts and turns, a brilliant, if not fully explored, analogy.

The sublimely titled "Swimming to Cecile," an elegy for three dancers, is a lovely, slow, often agonizing dance. Designer Ronald Aiji Kajiwara's swimming pool set engulfs the dancers, turning them into struggling sea creatures whose at-

tempts for air are poignant and often painful to watch.

The live vocal text and the sound tape are difficult to interpret, at times confusing to the point of distraction. But the piece's final image is so lovely that it explains away most of the work's troubling obscurities.

Suzanne Costello's "Common Gardens" is a step or two to the side of Pimsler's sensibility. I saw in it a subversively funny exploration of the "Diva" mentality.

Moving to some lovely soprano vocal music, six dancers standing on pedestals work their way through the bows, poses and grand gestures of the "artiste."

The figures look bigger than life on their pedestals, and when they either knock themselves off or get taken down by one of the other performers, the parody comes fully alive.

*(Lynne Conner is a dance critic for The Pittsburgh Press.)*

# The Washington Post

Dance

## Pimsler's Quiet Depth

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By Pam Sommers  
Special to The Washington Post

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Like that of many artists working today, choreographer Stuart Pimsler's conception of dance treats movement as only one component of a theatrical whole. Indeed, the striking things about the two pieces performed Sunday afternoon at Dance Place by Stuart Pimsler Dance and Theater were their overall look and sound, the harmony of color, shadow and tone, the way in which a certain garment meshed with a particular musical passage.

Both "Stadiums" and "Swimming to Cecile" seem to spring from some deep psychological place. "Stadiums," a work for all six members of this excellent Ohio-based troupe and a curly-haired 9-year-old boy named Derek Sylvan, is a surrealistic depiction of fathers and sons, and what appear to be a Jewish family's rituals and games. To the sounds of an Indonesian gamelan and a succession of cantorial chants and songs, a young boy, his adult incarnation (Pimsler) and a quartet of elders—at one point garbed in long, black Hasidic-looking coats and puffing on pipes—move slowly through Ronald Aiji Kajiwara's evocative stadium set. The boy swings a baseball bat; the elders gesture mysteriously, urgently in response. The elders bounce red balls methodically. The boy moves six red folding chairs from place to place. Pimsler embraces one of the elders, experiences rejection, then acceptance.

"Swimming to Cecile," dedicated to Pimsler's late mother, is a poetic attempt at sorting out the feelings of loss, anger and confusion that surface after the death of a loved one. Set to a haunting, stop-and-start score by John Adams, the piece opens with an unsettling, spotlit solo of falls and recoveries by a young woman (Janet Parrott) in black dress and pumps, followed by an equally unsettling duet for Suzanne Costello and Susan Hamilton. Parrott whispers and rages into a microphone, first on and then off stage. When the lights finally go up, we find ourselves on the edge of a vast swimming pool—another wonderful design by Kajiwara. The three women—now dressed in bathing suits, their hair soaking wet—become naiads, sending their arms up and out in alternately feverish and languorous strokes, puffing their cheeks out, shaking the moisture off their hands. Though these movements cry out for more incisive shaping and dynamic range, they succeed—in tandem with the music, set and lighting—in evoking an ever-changing state of mind.

# THE PLAIN DEALER

OHIO'S LARGEST NEWSPAPER CLEVELAND SATURDAY, MAY 28, 1988

## Columbus troupe creative, surprising

By **WILMA SALISBURY**

DANCE MUSIC CRITIC

Stuart Pimsler Dance & Theater of Columbus has changed dramatically since it last appeared here three years ago. Then, Pimsler used a limited movement vocabulary to make strong social statements. Last night at Cleveland State University, Pimsler's works revealed a new openness and emotionalism that humanized his choreography and made it deeply touching.

The program, which will be repeated tonight, consisted of a solo, two duets, a trio and an ensemble piece for the full company of five. The imaginative subject-matter choreography dealt with romance, isolation, autobiography, memory and grief. The company projected each work with technical strength and expressive power. The movements were skillfully integrated with props, taped music, spoken texts and discreet lighting.

The evening of surprises opened with "Type-A Romance," a frenetic duet choreographed by Suzanne Costello, the company's associate artistic director and Pimsler's wife. To a disco beat, the couple portrayed energetic yuppies in business suits. Carrying briefcases, they marched to work in stiff steps, interacted as equals who lifted each other and disco-danced with the same intensity they took to the office. No sentimentality was allowed in their fast-paced romance. But there was plenty of tongue-in-cheek humor.

"A Man, A Woman," Pimsler's view of romance, was softer in feeling but equally clever in concept. Costumed in

### DANCE

#### STUART PIMSLER

bathrobes, the man and woman each read a different novel and reacted to its contents. In response to her romance novel, Costello danced with sweeping phrases and voluptuous movements. In response to his drier book, Pimsler moved narrowly in the klutzy style of a non-dancer. Gradually, she infiltrated his consciousness with her juicier thoughts. After removing their robes, they danced together with flair and exchanged meaningful gifts.

In "Joy," his autobiographical solo, Pimsler carried on an imaginary conversation with his Aunt Gertie. Costumed in blue jeans and a Celtics jacket, he recalled his Bar Mitzvah and his feeling of being a black man trapped in a Jewish body. Doing ballroom steps to jazz and pop music, he told secrets about his dad and analyzed his own poor self-image. Dropping his blue jeans to his ankles, he hobbled about weakly while describing his years in law school. Then, emerging triumphant in a company T-shirt, he expressed the joy of discovering modern dance and founding a dance troupe.

"Swimming to Cecile," Pimsler's newest piece, was dedicated to his mother, who died in 1964. A moving tribute, the slow-paced piece expressed affection, dependence, grief and self-sufficiency in simple but telling movements. Based on a falling motif and swimming strokes, the work focused alternately on a mother-daughter duo and a woman alone. Initially, the woman

alone repeatedly fell, got up and called "Where are you?" in a desperate voice. Between her moments in the spotlight, the daughter repeatedly fell, and the mother helped her up.

In the second phase of the grieving process, the woman alone did swimming strokes at the top of a pool, while the mother-daughter duo did the same strokes and breathing exercises in the pool, which was effectively suggested by Ronald Kajiwara's minimal set and the dancers' swimming suits and wet hair. Ultimately, the woman alone relaxed and reached down into the pool as the mother and daughter climbed up to meet her. The slow, controlled movements by Costello, Janet Parrott and Susan Hamilton made the piece seem like a dream. Minimalist music by John Adams gave it an other-worldly flavor.

Completing the program was "Islands," a dramatic piece about isolation. Set to pseudo-baroque music, the work began with two women in black dresses thrashing their arms in agony as they stood rooted to cardboard rectangles. When a man and a woman entered on their knees, pushing themselves along on their own cardboard boats, the two isolates softened their gestures and welcomed the strangers, who fanned the women, sheltered them from the sun and covered them with cardboard blankets to the accompaniment of New Age music. A silent conversation between the two couples and another woman turned to a quarrel, and the multi-layered dance ended where it began with each character alone in space.

# The New York Times

## *Dance: By Stuart Pimsler, Antiwar Work, 'Sentry'*

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By JENNIFER DUNNING

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**S**TUART PIMSLER works with a limited movement vocabulary, a lot of ideas, and a stage presence reminiscent of Woody Allen's film persona. The mix was not always a productive one in the dances presented by Stuart Pimsler Dance & Theater on Saturday at the Emanu-El Midtown Y.M.-Y.W.H.A. But in "Sentry" Mr. Pimsler has a work that must stand as one of the most powerful antiwar dances that have been seen in a long time.

"Sentry," set to a soundscore by Ruth Anderson and designed by Ronald Kajiwara and Barry Neel, has a wounding simplicity. But it can be seen on a number of levels, from a conceptualist exploration of task-oriented movement for four dancers and piles of sandbags to an evocation of the loneliness and fear of the soldier on night watch that summoned up chilling memories of war for one veteran in the audience.

Trudging sturdily about a dark space whose perimeter was marked by the sandbags, the dancers performed their soldiers' duties with the directness and candor of children at play. The sense of children playing was enhanced by Linda Yoder-Krohn's declamation in sing-song French of standard sentries' orders, fragments of gesture actually used in one old French children's game, and snatches of song.

But juxtaposed delicately with all this were sudden, fleeting moments of horror. Bodies spurted into the air at one point, as if thrown by a blast. And "talk to no one," the seventh sentry rule prescribed, "except in the line of duty." Created in part through a grant from the Ohio Arts Council, "Sentry" is a remarkable piece of work, performed by a cast that also included Cavin Bodouin, Suzanne Costello and Mr. Pimsler, and lit sensitively by Jon Garness.

The evening's other highlight was David Gordon's "Negotiable Bonds," which explored partnering and love with Mr. Gordon's usual ironic wit and tenderness. The duet — enchanted as well as enchanting — was set to music by Mozart and was well danced by Miss Costello and Mr. Pimsler.

Mr. Pimsler's new "House," performed by four dancers to music by Jimi Hendrix, took a mordant look at domesticated life. Like his "Piercing the Vell," it used props inventively. But the inherent logic of "Sentry" was missing in large part from the two dances. And Mr. Pimsler's "Poems by Field and Stream," which completed the program, was impenetrable.

# COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

At the heart of SPDT's aesthetic vision is the belief that the arts have the most significant impact when participants are actively involved in the creative process. The company has been particularly committed to those groups and individuals who do not generally have the opportunity to see their lives, culture, or experience reflected through the arts. SPDT has created projects and performance works with community casts representing a broad socio-economic cross-section of the population, including collaborations with healthcare professionals, parents and children, high school athletes, senior citizens, and many others.

SPDT's community-inclusive programs give voice to those populations who typically do not have an opportunity to see their lives as the focal point for arts exploration.



## Arts & Healthcare

**WASH** (*Working with Artists, Sharing the Healing*) an annual symposium for Twin Cities' artists and caregivers presented from March 2002 through 2009. WASH helped participants explore the potential for connecting creative expression and healing.

**Caring for the Caregiver**, a movement/story based workshop for healthcare professionals including

physicians, nurses, medical students, hospice staff and volunteers, social workers, therapists, counselors, chaplains, administrative personnel, as well as patients and their families.

**Meaning in Movement** workshops for stroke survivors and their caregivers.

**Life Stories**, a seated movement/story workshop for senior adults to give voice to their life histories.

## Arts & Education



### ***K-12 Residencies***

**Performances** of the Company's current Repertory which includes "Talk Piece," a post performance discussion with the audience.

**Lecture/Demonstrations** - Includes selections from SPDT's current repertory and narration by an Artistic Co-Director, which invites participants to step through the process of making dance/theater with the artist.

**Movement and Dance** classes for Children (K-12).

*"... We will not forget how your company provided our students with a comprehensive dance experience, one that will continue to influence their appreciation and perhaps participation in the performing arts for years to come. We were especially impressed with your natural teaching talents and sensitivities to our students' needs".* (Deborah E. O'Brien, Principal, Beachwood Elementary School)

**Family Matter Program** – This in depth residency focuses on family history and ancestry while celebrating the participants' individuality.

**Families in Motion**, a movement workshop for children and adults to participate in together.



### ***University Residencies***

The company's interdisciplinary curriculum engages students in dance, theater, literature, and other related areas of study. Unique offerings include:

**Commissioned Works** selected Current Repertory and new works may be commissioned.

**Master Classes** for Dance Students and Dancers which include Modern Dance Technique, Movement/Text Improvisation,

Composition/Choreography and Repertory.

**The Artist as Citizen** – An introduction to community inclusive art making that connects artists to non-traditional populations such as healthcare providers and stroke survivors

**Survival Strategies** – Insight into the working world of artists by providing strategies for becoming a self-sustaining artist in contemporary culture. Tools such as resumes, grant writing, budgets, auditions, and two-year plans are addressed.

*"... Your lecture demonstration ended an exciting day of visual art in motion. The movements of the entire company were spell-bounding as you escorted us through your thoughts while creating the work. That evening was truly a magical and emotional experience."* (Jay T. Hairston, Baldwin Wallace College)



## Community Projects

**McKinley's Carnation** (1992) was commissioned by a consortium of public and private preservation agencies to celebrate the renovation and legacy of the historic Ohio Statehouse. This work was performed on the grounds of the State Capitol and included an intergenerational cast of fifty-five individuals.

**Rest/Stop** (1994) was commissioned with funds from the American Dance Touring Initiative and the University of Florida. During a three-month residency, SPDT created a traveling performance work that transported audiences on school buses to five different outdoor locations including a retirement home housed on a former plantation, a 1950's art-deco motel and swimming pool, a nature center, and a public parking lot transformed into a beach. Each location was selected because of its unique historical or cultural significance for the City of Gainesville. The cast included 35 community performers, ages 10-85 years old.

**Out of Our Hands** (1995) was commissioned by the City of Allentown, PA and its Mayfair Arts Festival. This work was performed by community dancers and nurses from local hospitals and staged in an empty, outdoor public swimming pool.

**Out of This World/The Life After Life Project**, (1997-2001) was originally commissioned by the University of Arizona Presents. This project was one of the only six national projects supported by major funding from The Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Arts Partners Program in 1998. OOTW was recreated in cities across the U.S. (including the Twin Cities in January, 2001) for casts of 30-50 local artists and caregivers. The community outreach component of OOTW included workshops at hospitals, hospices, nursing homes, veteran's homes, retirement villages, Native American reservations, AIDS support groups, local public schools, universities and other community locales

**Moving Inquiries** (2002) commissioned by Pathways and the The Weisman Art Museum in Minneapolis and presented at the Museum in conjunction with the national exhibit *Hospice: A Photographic Inquiry*. The cast included fifteen community members from a myriad of professionals, ranging from business to counseling to teaching.

**The Beauty in Difference Project**, (2002-2006) explored the emergency state of cultural tensions in the aftermath of September 11. Through a comprehensive series of workshops at culturally specific neighborhood centers throughout Hennepin and Anoka Counties, participants collaborated with SPDT to uncover stereotypes and cultural patterns of bias. The objective of the project was to blur the demographics of cultural differences by identifying universal themes present in the contemporary human condition. The common thread connecting all of the project's activities was an invitations to discuss, reveal, and surrender those personal secrets relating to people of other races, other religions, other countries, or any other group that was identified as "them" by another group or individual.

# Star Tribune

NEWSPAPER OF THE TWIN CITIES

ONSTAGE

January 26, 2001 Star Tribune 13

## Life after loss

Stuart Pimsler connects dancers, actors, musicians and real-life caregivers in a work about how life goes on after death.

By Camille LaFevre  
Special to the Star Tribune

For Stuart Pimsler, the afterlife doesn't denote a world beyond death. He describes his new dance/theater piece as "a work about the afterlife, meaning the life the living live after their loved ones have died. You know, how we live with loss."

Pimsler further believes that American culture is becoming more comfortable with death, an awareness heightened by AIDS, cancer education and an aging baby boomer generation. "There's a willingness, curiosity and desire to embrace death as a subject matter," said Pimsler, co-director of Stuart Pimsler Dance and Theater in Minneapolis. "And caregivers, of course, have always been there."

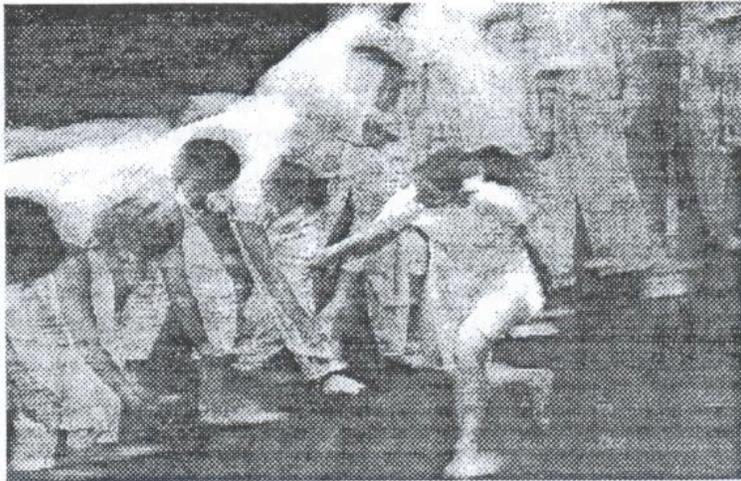
In "Out of This World/The Life After Life Project," co-directed by

his wife and artistic partner, Suzanne Costello, Pimsler collaborated with a variety of artists and health-care providers during a series of workshops.

Judging from a rehearsal last week, it's a celebratory life. And a life that fearlessly focuses on the inevitability of farewell.

A melding of film, movement, live and taped music, singing and storytelling, "Out of This World" has a dreamy quality. The 40-member cast (a mix of Pimsler's company members, local artists and 11 caregivers from seven Twin Cities health-care institutions) are dressed in white, except for Minneapolis guest artist Maria Cheng, who wears black.

Cheng recites poetry and tells stories about her Chinese grandfather, prompting memories from other members of a cast that ranges in age from 6 to 60. They



Vanessa Voakul dashes past an undulating group of performers, touching each one as she goes, in "Out of This World/The Life After Life Project."

Star Tribune photos  
by Joey McLeister

enact visions of their own deaths. They recite the names of loved ones lost, "entering into their ultimate stillness." They name and rejoice in body parts they've inherited from mothers, cousins, uncles. One performer shows, through movement and storytelling, how her family in New York celebrated the passing of her aunt in Haiti.

"Out of This World" actually began in 1988, when Pimsler choreographed "Swimming to Cecile," a work about Pimsler's mother, who died when he was 15. "We got a lot of national attention with that work," Pimsler recalls. "And as we toured it, audiences kept thanking us for giving them the chance to see a piece of art that got them in touch with their own loss."

He also began receiving requests from holistic and alternative-care facilities to conduct programs that would help caregivers find expression for their own emotional issues through dance and theater.

In 1992, he initiated a program of workshops in Gainesville, Fla.,

### OUT OF THIS WORLD/ THE LIFE AFTER LIFE PROJECT

When: Stuart Pimsler Dance and Theater.

When: 8 p.m. today and Sat.

Where: Ted Mann Concert Hall, 2128 S. 4th St., University of Minnesota West Bank campus, Mpls.

Ticket: \$12-\$21. 612-624-2345.

called Caring for the Caregiver. The workshops have since been conducted throughout the United States, Canada and Israel. "Out of This World," presented previously in New York City, Pittsburgh, Tucson, Ariz., and Columbus, Ohio, is an outgrowth of those workshops.

For many years, Pimsler's company was located in Columbus; it performed in the Twin Cities throughout the 1990s. Pimsler and Costello twice were visiting professors at the University of Minnesota's dance program. In 1999, the couple relocated to the

Twin Cities, not only because Costello hails from St. Paul. "We were attracted to the breadth of the dance, theater and literary communities here," Pimsler said, adding that "all the water here" was another bonus.

Even before "Out of This World," Pimsler said, "Our work has always looked at real life for inspiration. Caregivers are just one population from the real world we've worked with — we've also worked with children and seniors. But there's always been a good fit and comfort level with caregivers. We didn't have to worry about how we contextualized our investigation."

In "Out of This World," he adds, "we're looking at how loss resonates in the body or in memory. It's just a continuation of what we've always been interested in. The emotional underbelly. The big issues of the heart — love, loss and relationships." — Camille LaFevre is a St. Paul dance writer.

Stuart Pimsler, left, works with caregiver Arnold Weiss. "Our work has always looked at real life for inspiration," Pimsler said.



# LETTERS OF APPRECIATION & RECOMMENDATION



August 18, 2011

To Whom it May Concern,

This is a letter of gratitude and support for Stuart Pimsler Dance & Theatre, who offered a week long residency and performance of "The Ends of Love" at Winona State University in the Department of Theatre and Dance during the 2010-2011 academic year. We are a small department with a dance minor program, and throughout the week we were all entranced and inspired by the warmth, intelligence and artistry of the company members, who shared generously and inclusively. Our students were challenged to instill their movements with meaning from the inside out, and to show up in a very authentic way in rehearsal and residency activities. This was modeled and beautifully and reinforced through the dedication, commitment level, and friendly presence and of each SPDT company member.

Throughout the residency week, over 750 WSU students were engaged through master classes, activities, rehearsals, and the beautifully wrought performance of "Ends of Love." The residency also included community outreach to a local nursing home where staff and family participated in a "Caring for the Caregiver" workshop. It was a life giving to see the joy of residents of Saint Anne Extended Health Care and Callista Court Assisted Living Center expressing aspects of their life stories through movement. The playful and relaxed environment, and the skilled support of company members working one on one with the residents brought out the best in everyone!

The company practices and embodies their mission. "Theatre of the heart and mind" truly reflects their integrated approach to dance theatre that is relevant, poignant, visceral, and emotionally engaging. The artistic quality and depth of their research, expressive choreography, and teaching hooked our students, faculty, and audience members on multiple levels of inquiry about art and life.

As guest teaching artists with a packed daily schedule, they continually took the time to listen, connect and get to know us. SPDT showed a genuine interest and caring in us as individuals and as a community. Their presence, warmth, and positive influence on our dancers continues to be revealed in their learning and artistic connections. We are very fortunate that the company will be returning to Winona to work with us again this year.

Please contact me if I may be of further assistance by email: [gcohenour@winona.edu](mailto:gcohenour@winona.edu) or phone: (507) 457-5665.

Sincerely,  
Gretchen Cohenour  
Professor and Dance Program Director



**CENTRAL MIDDLE SCHOOL**

**Principal Mary Bussman • 763-528-4705**

**Assistant Principal John Kulick • 763-528-4715**

**Assistant Principal Rick Ostby • 763-528-4717**

900 49<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE • Columbia Heights, MN 55421

763-528-4700 PHONE • 763-528-4707 FAX

[www.colheights.k12.mn.us](http://www.colheights.k12.mn.us)

November 2, 2010

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing in support of the Stuart Pimsler Dance and Theater in their application for the 2010-11 Arts Learning grant. Central Middle School is located in Columbia Heights, a first ring suburb northeast of Minneapolis. Our students are diverse with approximately a 28% Hispanic students, 32% Black students and 32% White students. Additionally, 72% of our students live in poverty and 28% are English learners. As a result of a 2010 Arts Learning grant supported by Legacy funding, the Stuart Pimsler Dance & Theater (SPDT) served as our resident dance company here at Central Middle School in Columbia Heights to create *Family Matters*. Four artists in residence joined seventy-five sixth-grade students for two weeks in October (10/1-15, 2010) working intensively with the students and three teachers—English, Physical Education and Visual Art teachers. SPDT prefaced the residency with three planning meetings, July through September, with the school principal and the teachers to be involved. The *Family Matters Project* residency began with a lecture and demonstration which featured the entire company and which was presented to all sixth grade students. Subsequently, SPDT worked with a selected group of 75 sixth grade students. Through these daily meetings, the dance artists presented the history of dance, built movement vocabulary skills, and directed the creation of a dance performance. At the end of the residency, the students presented the work they had created to their parents, other family members and the rest of the sixth-grade class. As another way to connect the residency into the greater community, SPDT presented their *Families in Motion* evening workshop, which was open to all school families. The Family Matters Project was a wonderfully integrated residency with students writing *I Am From* poems in English class; studying and creating family portraits in visual arts class; and sharing and playing games from their families in physical education. The SPDT *Family Matters Project* residency provided our students with access to in-depth arts experiences, strengthened their knowledge and appreciation of dance, and offered a meaningful arts experience that relates to their own lives. We look forward to working with SPDT again next year and hope the funding will be there to allow Central Middle School to do so.

Sincerely,  
Mary A.



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
**ARIZONA**<sup>®</sup>  
TUCSON ARIZONA

888 North Euclid Room 203  
PO Box 210158  
Tucson, Arizona 85721-0158  
(520) 621-3364  
FAX (520) 621-5753

September 30, 1998

To the Project on Death in America;

I am writing to you today in support of Stuart Pimsler Dance and Theatre (SPDT) and their project ***Out of this World; The Life After Life Project***.

For nearly two years, **UApresents**, the arts presenting entity at the University of Arizona, worked collaboratively with SPDT in the development of this project. The project consisted of a series of workshops with individuals in the health care field in Tucson, exploring their attitudes towards death and afterlife. Through the workshop process, a performance piece was created and performed in Tucson with local caregivers, local musicians and SPDT. I know that SPDT's intent is to bring the project to other cities around the country.

Our experience working with SPDT was very positive and I can say without hesitation that the project made a major impact on our community. The individuals involved from our community explored deeply and creatively their own attitudes towards death and afterlife. They discovered greater knowledge, resources and creativity within themselves than they might ever have imagined and they brought those insights to the work. Many have affirmed that their participation in this project changed their work and ultimately changed their life.

Since Tucson is a highly diverse community, SPDT worked with multiple cultures as part of this project as well. The culturally distinct understandings of spirituality and afterlife became an integral part of the final performance piece. And again, the participants themselves found their beliefs challenged, supported, reviewed, tested and ultimately affirmed. For all of the people involved, the opportunity to examine their own belief systems was extraordinary.

I know that SPDT wants to continue to explore this area through their work and I believe they have both the talent and the commitment to do so. I would urge support of their application so that others throughout America will have the unique, spiritual growth experience that the residents of Tucson did.

If you have any questions or wish to talk with me further please do not hesitate to telephone.

Sincerely,

Kenneth J. Foster  
Director



**Letter Excerpts**  
from  
**Out of This World Participants**  
1998

Dear Stuart and Suzanne,

*"I can tell you that the experience was beyond any thing I ever could have imagined. Working with you on this project proved to be a profound journey for me, so much so that when I work with my patients now I find I am a changed person. My awareness, my sensibilities, my consciousness have been raised immeasurably.*

*I want you to know what has emerged from our performance of your project here in Pittsburgh. Several of us have been asked to speak to medical residents, other caregivers and staff members about our experience and insight. This effort has already begun, and I've witnessed young residents and long-time caregivers and hardened administrators avidly soak up our discussions about the mind-body-spirit connections".*

**Lori Cardille, Spiritual caregiver and Unit worker  
AUH Forbes Hospice, Pittsburgh**

*"I have a Master's degree in Social Work and have been employed as a geriatric and hospice case manager/counselor for the last twelve years. As a result of this project, the content of the performance, and the artistic discipline, I have the ability to connect with patients and their families on a deeper level. As a result, I do not hesitate to hold their hand a little tighter, look into their eyes a little deeper, and to trust my instinctive powers. I have learned to open myself more to those around me and feel the capabilities my ancestors have endowed on me. I have not had a sound base to work out my own grief issues for many years. I believe I am more focused on my patients needs and my own goals as a result of this liberating and trusting environment. I do not believe I can label the continued benefits to my profession or life changes I received from the intensity of this performance. I received unconditional love and support from the participants, a climate to express endless emotion through dance and invaluable time to focus attention on my own needs. My spirit continues to soar, my energy is renewed and my creativity expanded my perceptions beyond belief".*

**Joyce Talaga, MSW  
Pittsburgh**

*" I have been an RN for 21 years. I spent the first 5 years of my career in critical care nursing. Most of the remaining years I have been involved with hospice care. My work in hospice care has allowed me to enter peoples lives in a very intimate way. I am often invited to guide them through a consuming and tumultuous period of their lives. Of course it is they who do the really difficult work. My job is to act as the midwife or teacher during this time of treasured endings.....Professionally, the rehearsals have reinforced for me the importance of discipline and creativity in any project. I have developed a stronger and more clear voice in communicating my ideas and visions for our hospice program. This is vital in our development as we struggle with the challenges of merging two hospice programs. Hanging on to the essence of hospice during this time of healthcare uncertainty is proving to be more difficult than one could have imagined. The Out of This World, experience has anchored me in the knowledge that new and different ways are to be explored and not feared. Calling upon the past in the form of history and ancestors can be a source of direction and healing along the way. I have been able to do this with co-workers as they express their fears about the future of our hospice".*

**Maria DePasquale, RN  
AUH Forbes Hospice, Pittsburgh**

# UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

*Twin Cities Campus*

*Dance Program*

*Department of Theatre Arts and Dance  
College of Liberal Arts*

*106 Norris Hall  
172 Pillsbury Drive S.E.  
Minneapolis, MN 55455*

*612-624-5060  
Fax: 612-625-2849*

November 21, 1995

To Whom It May Concern:

It is with great pleasure that I write this letter of the highest recommendation for Stuart Pimsler and Suzanne Costello, two consummate dance/theater artists who are also master teachers, seasoned administrators and wise, generous human beings.

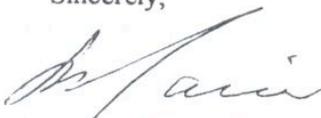
I have known Suzanne since college days when we were both aspiring dance professionals and Stuart since 1989 when I and Robert Dunn were guest artists in Columbus sponsored by the Ohio Dance Coalition. The residency entailed extensive contact with the area's premiere dance professionals through classes, performances and seminars on choreography, dance theory, management and career development. I have vivid memories of Suzanne and Stuart's incisive and knowledgeable contributions to all the proceedings. It was obvious that not only were they highly respected but also that they were regarded with warmth and looked to for leadership by their peers in the professional dance community.

Thus it has been with great pleasure that I have followed the development of their artistic voice into one that is authentic and riveting, laced with wit and passion, filled with a deep wisdom of the human condition and girded by meticulous attention to craft.

Our University Dance Program was most fortunate that Stuart and Suzanne were able to be, in the winter of 1995, our Cowles Chair Guest Artist, joining a distinguished roster of past guests including Merce Cunningham, Dan Wagoner and Bill T. Jones. During their four week residency, Stuart taught advanced modern technique, Suzanne taught advanced composition, both choreographed a work on the students and both participated in community outreach. All our students simply loved them - the composition class created extra-ordinary work, the technique students developed a new understanding of performance projection and the wonderful dance Stuart and Suzanne created was the hit of our annual concert. They gave such personal attention to each student, drawing forth authentic exploration, nurturing gifted nascent choreographic voices, pushing the comfort zones of performance and inspiring virtuosic physicality.

I was very appreciative of their sensitivity to the workings of a university dance program and their thorough awareness of the issues confronting the fine arts in higher education. Every member of our faculty found Stuart and Suzanne to be genuine, gracious and dedicated to being part of a team effort. In short, their residency was second to none. They were a joy and I can't recommend them enough. A dance department would be most fortunate indeed to have two such fine artists and persons. Please do not hesitate to call if you have any questions, 612-625-4558.

Sincerely,

  
Maria Cheng, Director





Stuart Pimsler Dance and Theater Company  
61 Jefferson Avenue  
Columbus, Ohio 43215

January 16, 1992

Dear Stuart and Suzanne:

I wanted to express my sincere appreciation to you again for the wonderful residency you brought to Kettering. Over the past ten years, we have continued to present artists in residence programs in the schools and felt your work with the Fairmont High School Wrestling Team was one of the most rewarding experiences I have encountered. Even though it has been four months since the end of the program, I still reflect on the possibilities we have developed in working with sports teams and opening new avenues for athletic training in Kettering.

I am anxious to review the documentary video Fairmont High is producing from both the residency sessions and interviews with both of you. I feel this tape will be of great value in promoting the residency to area schools with progressive athletic programs.

One beneficial planning presented in the residency was in setting the schedule to run for five days each week and immediately after school. Under your direction, the first week of training became focused with discipline and concentration, while the last week the full company added a second wind of enthusiasm and excitement.

Please do not hesitate to use our residency as a reference for future projects. I enjoy the chance to talk about this project.

Sincerely,

Connie Campbell  
Cultural Arts Superintendent



Institute for the Advancement  
of the Arts in Education

347 Larkins Hall  
337 West 17th Avenue  
Columbus, OH 43210-1284

Phones 614-292-0867  
614-292-4311  
614-451-1518

July 10, 1991

Stuart Pimsler Dance/Theatre  
c/o Stewart Pimsler  
61 Jefferson Ave.  
Columbus, OH 43215

Dear Stuart,

Evaluations of IAAE's "Role of the Performing Arts in Education" are now in, and much to my delight, the teachers rated every session as outstanding. I feel the same way and am most appreciative of your contribution.

This was an unusual group--highly diverse in interests, backgrounds, and teaching responsibilities--yet they became close, warm, and cohesive during their growth in the arts. I believe the knowledgeable, non-intimidating, and often thrilling presentations set the stage for the interaction that followed.

My sincere thanks for your presentation.

Sincerely yours,

Bonnie Gilliom,  
Associate Director

BG/jk  
(IAAE/letters.91)



January 31, 1991

Stuart Pimsler  
SPDT  
61 Jefferson  
Columbus, OH 43215

Dear Stuart,

I want to thank you again for the wonderful work that you did as co-chair of the benefit for the AIDS Service Connection on December 1, 1990. This celebration of Day Without Art was one of the most exciting and moving that I have witnessed. Clearly, your leadership and vision helped to make this event the huge success that it was.

In talking with others about the performances and the cabaret, it was unanimous that these two major events were of the highest quality. One colleague stated that he had not experienced a more professional, well executed benefit. Given the size, scope, and complexity of the evening, not to mention all of the work that preceded it, I hope that you are as pleased as I am with the results.

On behalf of the many persons living with AIDS/HIV in central Ohio who will benefit from the work that you have done, I give you my deepest thanks. Please let me know if there are other ways that we can continue to work together to serve the community.

Sincerely,

Rocky Morrison  
Executive Director



BOARD OF EDUCATION

# Centerville City Schools

May 17, 1990

To whom it may concern:

The Stuart Pimsler Dance and Theater Company was in residence at the Centerville City Schools from March 5-16, 1990. Stuart was in the schools the first week, and for the second week he was joined by the entire six person company. The residency featured a broad scope of activities including a core group daily class, lecture/demonstrations, movement and body awareness classes, open rehearsals, and informal discussion groups.

The residency, supported in part by a grant from the Ohio Arts Council, was a wonderful learning and awareness opportunity for the students, staff, and community of Centerville. Stuart and the other dancers brought a fresh, innovative approach to dance as an expression of life. Students and adults alike were encouraged to become involved viewers, using dance as a vehicle for creative thinking and expression.

I was most impressed by the company's interaction with students of all ages - how the dancers were able to get them to respond verbally and with body movement. It was fascinating to observe young students using creative thinking and imagination. The company is to be congratulated on their ability to help students to expand their thinking skills and express their feelings.

The residency was successful in our goal of bringing an awareness of dance as an art form to the schools and community. I hope that we will have another opportunity to work with the Stuart Pimsler Dance and Theater Company.

Sincerely,

Wayne Markworth  
Fine Arts Coordinator



# HOBART AND WILLIAM SMITH COLLEGES

Geneva, New York 14456-3397 315: 789-5500



June 20, 1988

Dear Stuart and Suzanne,

It has been well over two months since you were here and I've been meaning to write ever since. I simply wanted to express my gratitude to you and the rest of the Company for all your efforts and enthusiasm during the week of the performance and related events.

I thought it all went extremely well and that was the consensus of others, too. The performance was superb, but what made the week so special was the series of workshops and "happenings" (albeit planned) that built the momentum and enthusiasm for that culminating performance experience. Your visit had the qualities of a short residency -- perhaps too short, but wonderfully rich. The broadest range of students profited.

One of the ideals the Colleges tries to promote is that of interdisciplinarity. To that end, most departments have had a tradition of cooperation, exchanging their energies and theories, and even their guest artists/lecturers. The result is usually very positive and sometimes inspiring as was the case with your visit. The cross-fertilization that can result creates a very rich learning experience for our students where, for example, the distinctions between even the more distant artistic disciplines are appropriately revealed as thin. When my design class gets a dose of semiotics vis-à-vis performance art which relates to concepts usually understood by them for plastic media, then what they had formerly perceived as rhetoric is suddenly transformed into a universal language of artistic expression. Baby steps take a leap!

And all that learning was so entertaining. Your video work is very exciting -- just don't relinquish your live performances. I don't think the gains would ever outweigh the losses because so much of the illusion and artifice is traded away and the "truth" in it becomes distanced. Sounds like a contradiction, but the medium lacks scale and the ability to physically and emotionally penetrate in the same way as theater/dance. Consequently, the live three-dimensional experience when reduced and condensed into video becomes homogenized and flattened. Do you think this can be overcome? It does lend itself well to a pop culture. In any case, the student response to the video was particularly interesting and the debate was an engaging one. The video is very accomplished within its idiom both in terms of artistic and technical merit.

Needless to say, your performance was exhilarating and the subject of conversation for a good two weeks after you left. Intense yet disarming, the audience had the ability to be disengaged and yet personally touched at the same time. So it was somehow a paradoxically balanced experience evoking objective and subjective responses simultaneously. At these moments, "truth" is revealed despite artifice and probably because of it. I do think this balance (that I don't fully understand) is hard to achieve, rare in fact. And it is within this balance or tension that the art lies. Your work is really very powerful. I wish your group every continued success and will look forward to our next visit.

All my best,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Ted".

Ted Aub  
Chairman, Art Department



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## COLUMBUS PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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FORT HAYES CAREER CENTER  
546 Jack Gibbs Boulevard  
Columbus, Ohio 43215  
614/464-4591

June 8, 1987

To Whom It May Concern:

The Stuart Pimsler Dance Company completed a two week residency at The Fort Hayes Performing Arts School in Columbus, Ohio, during the spring of 1987. Both Stuart Pimsler and Suzanne Costello worked exceedingly well with our students and faculty. They brought a fresh approach to modern dance and theatre. They are supportive, flexible and caring people, as well as being innovative, creative dancers. Their work was exciting and students responded with enthusiasm to the classes and performances. I highly recommend The Stuart Pimsler Dance Company for a school residency. Stuart and Suzanne's artistry will bring a new energy to your school, your students and your staff.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sally Kriska".

Sally Kriska  
Supervisor The Fort Hayes School  
Of The Performing Arts

## CONTACT INFORMATION

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