

DANCE REVIEW

Sharing the Same Space, but Little Else

By JACK ANDERSON

DURHAM, N.C., July 4 — In addition to programs in the two major theaters on the campus of Duke University here, the American Dance Festival also schedules productions, including showings of experimental efforts and works-in-progress at other sites. Such "fringe" events help add an extra measure of excitement to the festival.

On Saturday night a roomy performance space called the Ark literally became a room in "Loose Piece: Alone Together." The setting represented an apartment complete with tables, chairs, a sofa and a television set.

And the apartment was inhabited by Mark Haim and Lisa Haim, the brother and sister who conceived, wrote, choreographed, directed and performed the piece, which blended movement with speech.

They portrayed ordinary people doing ordinary things. At least most of the things were ordinary. And the curious things that weren't were motivated by the ordinary.

Mr. Haim folded and sorted

Self-centered people trapped in their own mundane worlds.

clothes. Ms. Haim sprawled on the floor. He listened to inconsequential messages on his answering tape. She talked about being in a movie. He read a magazine and a Chinese take-out menu. She spoke to a toy dog as if it were real. He peered into a birdcage.

She had some sort of tantrum and worked off her anger by pedaling furiously on an exercise cycle. Both listened to a voice reading their horoscopes and knelt in separate parts of the room as if in meditation. During his meditations, Mr. Haim faced the television set.

He also danced two brief solos, one filled with stumblings that appeared to convey his character's feelings of insecurity, the other a lyrical one that may have expressed this man's

longings.

It ended when he fell to the floor writhing, as if experiencing a seizure. But he soon calmed down on the sofa.

What made the work curious was the way these two people, though occupying the same space, paid absolutely no attention to each other. They remained always preoccupied with their own doings until, at the end, Mr. Haim tried to touch Ms. Haim's shoulder. But she brushed him away.

Given what they had revealed earlier about the personalities of this man and woman, it was an appropriate and believable ending. It was also much too predictable. But both performers moved well, and their dramatic and comic gestures were skillfully timed. They were equally convincing in the dance sequences and in the long passages of everyday movements.

Unfortunately, they never made their characters interesting. These self-centered people certainly weren't saints. But their sins never seemed grand or fascinating enough to be worth watching in a theater.



Bruce Freelley for The New York Times

Lisa Haim in "Loose Piece: Alone Together," in Durham, N.C.