

TERRA INCOGNITA DISCOVERED

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The Synergic Theatre presented an exquisitely conceived and faultlessly accomplished theatre work at Pace Downtown on October 12. David and Suzanne White Manning over the years have developed a shadow show that incorporates all the arts. I do not usually enjoy watching shadows on a screen rather than real people—ISO has a rip-off act like that—but the Mannings have extended the genre, and have in the process perhaps extended Theatre itself.

We are modestly told three stories of America with well-chosen projected color slides, narration, music, dance, lighting, and the shadows balanced as to size, position, and movement. Even costuming is clear in those images. Everything is layered into a sense of three-dimensionality all its own.

The first segment, *Pasos*, concerns the memories of Martin Alonso Pinzon, the captain of the Pinta who evidently deserves much of the credit for Columbus' successful voyage, and was frustrated in the claiming of that credit. Ferni Reixach

reads this "journal" in a way that gave us character, place, and time. Lost is the story of the still mysteriously disappeared Roanoke Colony. Neville Aurelius is the voice the slightly cynical but loving grandfather of Virginia Dare, Margaret Chapman, the young Virginia, and Janett Pabon amusingly wry as the older Virginia, especially in her musings about spinach. Captain White's own paintings are projected as the actor portraying him appears to create them.

Closer to home is *Migrant*, the story of a young Irishwoman entering America through Ellis Island. I cannot imagine a more winning narration than that of O'Mara Leary as the girl, nor a more diverting series of upside down logic that her character displays.

Throughout, there is the endlessly imaginative play of size and space, apparent entrances and exits, appearances and reappearances in a new focus, of those shadows. While completely choreographed, nothing seems merely mechanical, and all has endless humanity.

Once in each segment, dancers appear in front of the screen, again extending the conception. Marie-Christine Giordano, with her air of vulnerable aristocracy and slightly Graham-sy legwork, and the quietly warm Elena Lopez Sans, have the longest dance portion, in the final story. Laura Fernandez, Sima Wolf, RP Brink, Tom Fountain, and Charles Navarette are the other fine performers.

But everything and everyone involved perform, including the backstage personnel who obviously must be very busy during the presentation. Mayumi Ohshima is listed as the Lighting Operator. Credits also list David Manning as the writer of the scripted text, and the technical and design director; and Suzanne White Manning for the choreography and costume coordination, but it is obvious that everyone concerned gave their all, communally.

Dance, acting, history lesson, art course, music discovery, whatever, *Terra Incognita* is a rich evening of theatre.