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DANCE: History in Motion, by the Mannings, C17.

Review/**Dance**

A Manning Double Bill

By ANNA KISSELGOFF

David Manning and Suzanne White Manning collaborate on mixed-media theater pieces with a strong dance component. "Lost," which concerns the 16th-century English colony that vanished from Roanoke Island, and "Old Stones," inspired by Romanesque churches in Catalonia, make up the typically original program they will be presenting again Thursday through Saturday.

Saturday night's performance at Schimmel Center for the Arts at Pace University (Spruce Street between Park Row and Gold Street), was marked by a brilliant integration of live dancers and shadowplay techniques. This breathtaking technical feat allowed visual and verbal metaphors to move pungently and effectively between the real and the imaginary, from personal experience to commentary on human behavior.

The freshness of the Mannings' approach is rooted in their independence. They are not part of the established downtown scene, but their work is no less experimental.

Often, their pieces stem from their own experiences. A teaching stint in Barcelona spawned "Old Stones." Anyone who has seen the Romanesque churches and frescos in both Spanish and French Catalonia will recognize how well "Old Stones" captures the spirit of timeless strength in these monuments.

The piece however, has its startling moments. The six women who initially bend to resemble rocklike

clumps against a screen (a slide of a church in a poppy field) rise and pose as Romanesque saints and disciples of Christ. Suddenly, one figure is stoned. Judas's kiss at that point has been mimed fleetingly. Only later is it seen on a slide of a fresco. Cello recordings by Pablo Casals add a rich dimension to the stream of flowing images. Lynn Anderson, Alyssa Bonilla, Malin Eklund, Katy Matheson, Pia Sidetun and Nancy Putnam Smithner were the dancers.

Mr. Manning, who wrote and directed "Lost," is obviously not interested in neat conclusions; a layering of images makes his point. Part of his text in "Lost" is drawn from the letters of John White, who was the grandfather of Virginia Dare, the first English child born in the New World. The figure of Virginia (seen as a frolicking shadow behind the screen or against images of Roanoke, N.C., beaches) is then identified with a modern pop singer and, by extension, today's "lost" woman.

The overall commentary in this revised version of an earlier piece is still obscure — especially after the Mannings raise a provocative theme. And this has to do with the fact that White decided to search for Spanish gold rather than return to Virginia Dare and the colony at the scheduled time. When he did, all were "lost" forever. This is the inadvertent betrayal that should be the central trauma of the Mannings' surprisingly emotional work. The cast, expert in timing, included Robert Johnson, Ms. Matheson, Ms. Bonilla and Ms. Anderson.