

# Group turns sound into motion and back again

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It's really nothing new. Musicians and dancers have been creating together through the ages.

What is unusual is musicians and dancers collaborating from an idea's conception through to its performance.

That's the modus operandi of PerksDanceMusicTheatre, the young, New York-based modern dance company that closed out Tidewater Performing Arts Society's 1997-98 season Saturday night in Virginia Beach.

Unlike other troupes, such as Sydney Dance Company with its "Free Radicals" or "Stomp," in which musicmakers and movers are virtually one and the same, Perks founder and choreographer Rebecca Stenn maintains the familiar us-and-them separateness; though the musicians are onstage with the dancers, they are largely relegated to the background and do not participate in the movement.

But the Perks musicians -- this night a keyboardist/cellist, violinist, bassist and percussionist -- are still vital to the motion, particularly evidenced by the opening piece, "Six Dancers In Search Of A Score." A world premiere actually performed by five dancers, the humorous work used sounds created by the musicians to drive a stream of common actions, executed in almost vaudevillian style: walking, opening doors, driving, fishing, swimming, skating, courtly and popular dancing.

The classical-ballet-trained Stenn's stints with Momix and Pilobolus shone in the inventiveness of her choreography, which frequently entailed props.

With "Iguana," Stenn brilliantly captured the deliberate gait and jerky head carriage

## REVIEW

**What:** PerksDanceMusicTheatre.

**When:** Saturday.

**Where:** The Virginia Beach Pavilion Theater.

of the lizard and used them as a launch point for a visually exciting solo using swift and striking port de bras.

Her "Ocean," in which dancers simulated a heaving ocean with a large, undulating piece of cloth, was beautiful. Buoyed by dancers invisible under the cloth, Stenn was lofted over and through the "waves" until she was finally gently swallowed by the staged sea.

"Walk This Way," another illusionist piece for three women, used extra-long skirts as props that dancers dragged, pulled, whirled and twisted around themselves and each other.

The evening's most stunning work, "The Embrace," featuring Helen Kim's plaintive violin, opened the program's second half. A couple, clad in all white, twisted and twined their limbs while slowly whirling atop a swiveling disc, allowing fluid rotation without movement of the feet. The effect was dreamy, almost surreal weightlessness, like the hovering of angels.

