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Two Pearson-Widrig Collaborations

By JACK ANDERSON

To see the two collaboratively choreographed works that Sara Pearson and Patrik Widrig presented Friday night at Performance Space 122 was to watch two talented artists dance their way into a rut. Both pieces, to taped collages, concerned lovers' difficulties in getting along. But these choreographic variations on a theme lacked variety.

The new "Heimweh" ("Homesick"), conceived and directed by Mr. Widrig, began with Ms. Pearson standing warily behind her partner. He looked equally uncomfortable. Eventually, they declared in unison, "There are trees in South America that are livelier than you are."

Despite that remark, the work managed to display the performers' considerable agility. Both delighted in malicious mischief. They shook each other up. They crashed to the floor and thrashed about. When Mr. Widrig commanded Ms. Pearson to dance, she did so harshly, almost compulsively. Later, he constructed a miniature cemetery by placing tiny crosses on a green cloth. Then Ms. Pearson toppled the tombstones. Nothing was sacred for either of them. Nevertheless, at one point they kissed and shared a glass of wine.

But they didn't live happily ever after. When Mr. Widrig temporarily left the stage, Ms. Pearson wolfed candy, only to spit it out. Mr. Widrig returned with a board game, about which he said, "It doesn't matter if you win or lose. It matters if you win." The game was called Trump.

"Heimweh" took a cynical view of human relationships. So did "Partners Who Touch, Partners Who Don't Touch," conceived and directed by Ms. Pearson. When she and Mr. Widrig didn't touch, they were unhappy. They were just as unhappy when they did.

An earlier version of this piece, presented in New York City last season, resembled a satiric cartoon. But because it shared the program with "Heimweh" on this occasion, it became just another chapter in a saga of interpersonal malaise. During the course of it, Ms. Pearson sprayed Mr. Widrig with whipped cream; a particularly messy scene involved the dropping of eggs, spaghetti, sugar and more whipped cream from a ladder.

Lovers do have problems; Ms. Pearson and Mr. Widrig belabored them.