

# LINCOLN Journal Star

LINCOLN, NEB.

FRIDAY

FEBRUARY 27, 1998

## Show probes ritual themes

BY LARRY L. KUBERT

Lincoln Journal Star

Explorations into cultural and ritualistic themes are the thrust of the experimental dance/theater work of performers Sara Pearson and Patrik Widrig.

The dancer/choreographer duo exercise this subject matter in four performance pieces running at the Wagon Train Project's 7th Street Loft.

The 90-minute show opens with the premiere of a new piece, "If Wishes Were Horses, Beggars Would Ride," featuring a cast of local performers, as well as Widrig and the duo's assistant, Mirah Moriarty.

Utilizing video, slides, the dramatic word and dance, the 30-minute piece addresses intergenerational communication and the connection between present and past via memoirs and personal histories.

Revealed are short verbal snippets that are personal and public, private and profound, humorous and sad, sober and enlightening.

This feeling of juxtaposition is often mirrored in the dance movements, which are mercurial and animated, then deliberate and

### On stage

■ **What:** "If Wishes Were Horses . . ."

■ **Where:** 7th Street Loft, Wagon Train Project, 504 S. Seventh St.

■ **When:** 7:30 tonight, 2 and 7:30 p.m. Saturday

■ **Tickets:** Suggested contribution, \$10 adults, \$5 students

poised. Yet a counterbalance seems to exist on both extremes.

There is some apprehension throughout the piece — it must be remembered that many of the performers are novices to such performance pieces — but some fine and confident moments come from Widrig and Moriarty, as well as Wayne Foster, Brent Martin and Gail Ogden.

Some chafing occurs with the combination of slides and dancing.

The visual pull between the two makes it difficult to focus on either one.

Pearson commands the stage with ease and confidence in the best piece of the night, "Dr. Pearson's Guide to Loss and Fear." The short movement/voice piece, punctuated by decisive and sharply controlled motions, amusingly probes her anxieties about absent characteristics and virtues.

This is followed by a marvelously limber Widrig, donning a '30s persona and offering a slyly gliding dance interpretation set to music by Fats Waller.

The concluding dance piece, "Ordinary Festivals," celebrates traditions and rituals centered around feasting and revelry with pleasant ethnic Russian/Balkan trappings.

The piece — featuring performances by Pearson, Widrig and Moore, plus Sheri Cohen-Vollmer, Chi Estes, Wendy Lodes, Cindy Radtke, Katie Schroeder as well as Moore and Ogden from the opening segment — is a warmly joyful effort astir with consanguineous heritage and custom.

With the dancers in a variety of raven black raiment, the approach to the piece is often whimsical and unfettered, melding ceremony into frenzied liberation.