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From sensuality to icy abstraction, trio show multifaceted dance talents

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Dancing doesn't get much better than this. Keith V. Goodman, Linda K. Johnson and Mary Oslund – three of Portland's most accomplished contemporary dancer-choreographers – are fascinating performers.

As their performances last weekend at Conduit show, each makes radically different kinds of dance, and each dances in an entirely different style. Goodman emphasizes the expression of emotion, Johnson stresses sense experience and Oslund accentuates the abstract qualities of movement and gesture.

But all three share an interest in form. Their work is clear, focused (though frequently too long) and extraordinarily demanding.

Goodman's premiere, "Shadow," is the most accessible work. Goodman and Jesse Berdine dance a formal study that examines human relationships. The movement is low, grounded and sustained, frequently conjuring up images of tai chi, capoeira (A Brazilian style tai chi)

and yoga. The two men move along great diagonals and from opposite corners, pass and carry on. They dance with affecting inwardness, suggesting a profound meditative state.

So when Berdine and Goodman actually focus on each other, the effect is nearly shocking. They become ordinary men contending with ordinary things – night noises, nightmares, night terrors.

Goodman's duet from the 1993 "Eternal Partners" treats the same content without any suggestion of narrative. It is cooler and more abstract. In "Eternal Partnes," extended unison highlights the differences between Goodman and Johnson in an especially sharp relief. He is absorbed in the dance state, she in the physical sensation of movement; he is earthen, she is liquid.

Johnson's sensuality also animates her collaboration with lighting designer Bill Boese, a work-in-

progress called "Tread." Warm washes of light emphasize generous sweeps of movement. Brightly, tightly focused beams of white illuminate and isolated hand. "Tread" alternately reveals and conceals itself.

Oslund's "Solo X" from her recent "Exhibit" also juxtaposes clarity and distortion. Photographic images show crisply on the wall, in a haze of gray on Oslund's black costume. Blazing white light flattens her features, emphasizing the unsettling character of repeated enigmatic gestures. Gestures form intricate phrases, then return as punctuation. Many suggest confinement, repression, oppression; bursts of near-frenzy alternate with moments of stillness. Oslund also performed "Lot," an excerpt from her "Salvation Pieces" with Johnson and Chad Johnson. "Lot" uses a similar gestural and emotional basis but suffers from being out of context.