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A Dedication to Emotion Instead of the Intellect

*Randy James Dance Works
Ohio Theater*

Choreographic variety and vitality helped make it pleasant to watch the performance by Randy James Dance Works on Friday night.

Yet despite their energy, Mr. James's works were not always intellectually stimulating. His choreography sometimes only skimmed the surfaces of feelings and ideas.

The emotional temperature went from cool to hot in the new "Shallow Water: No Diving Allowed," to recorded blues music. Although the choreographic cleverness of the shifts in mood held the attention, the contrasts looked contrived.

Fortunately, another premiere had passion as well as ingenuity. In "Edge" — to a tense score by Alan Terricciano — Missy Pfohl Smith, Patricia Plascak and Elizabeth Spatz appeared to be people on the edge of an emotional abyss. Moments of calm were unexpectedly interrupted when everyone seemed threatened and then swept away by a mysterious unseen force. Occasionally the women looked helpless and ran in panic across the theater's pillar-bordered stage. Mr. James thereby put an unusual performing space to good use. One could never guess what would happen next there.

"Endured Lull," a duet for David Boyd and Yukihiko Kawashiro, was equally intense. The two men often literally threw themselves at each other. Some of the choreographic effects were much too predictable, though, and given the overall tone of the piece, it became easy to guess that what began as a handshake would soon become a belligerent tug.

"With Alligators in the Bayou: You Water Ski Real Good," a good-natured romp, brought the evening to a festive close.

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