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Feet feat

Storytelling the heart of variety of summer dance performances

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There is something about summer evenings in Chicago that gets dancers (and their audiences) all limbered up and ready to go. This weekend, for example, dance lovers can choose from three wildly different programs that share one particular element -- a devotion to storytelling (in all its guises) as opposed to just movement.

"Flamenco Passion," the always lavish and supremely polished extravaganza produced by Chicago's Ensemble Espanol Dance Theater, is invariably the next best thing to a trip to Seville. The ingenious tap dramatics of Chicago Tap Theater can turn percussive feet into something akin to a typewriter. And the consistently contemporary-minded experimentation of Lucky Plush Productions rarely fails to put a brainy philosophical and linguistic spin on the art of modern dance.

Here's a closer look:

LUCKY PLUSH PRODUCTIONS IN "THE SKY HANGS DOWN TOO CLOSE"

Last November, choreographer Julia Rhoads and her Lucky Plush Productions presented "Cinderbox 18," one of the most intriguing modern dance works of the season. Now, Rhoads' troupe is presenting "The Sky Hangs Down Too Close," a work of movement and banter by Peter Carpenter and the Lucky Plush ensemble of seven that also deals with notions of human contact and motivation, and freedom. Big ideas? To be sure (and Carpenter takes some cues from playwright Bertolt Brecht.) Several sequences in the work find the impressively individualistic dancers moving about with real dollar bills clamped between their teeth (hope they've had their tetanus shots). Others find them in stylized wrestling matches and babbling conversations in the mode of Beckett. They are performing in a classic open space at Galaxie -- an immaculate if somewhat hidden cluster of dance studios in an industrial space at 2603 W. Barry. Galaxie can be reached by heading west on Belmont and turning south about two blocks past Western (at Rockwell). "The Sky Hangs Down Too Close" runs tonight through Sunday. Tickets: (773) 267-6010.

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