

'Bound' offers compelling vision of control and freedom

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In "Bound," choreographer Christine Bennett, with visual artist Beth Galston, has made a dark,

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evocative dance about control and freedom — and how people, in turn, manipulate and collaborate with one another to get each. The setting for the work is stark: five 20-foot-high open-faced columns of white gauze that, serendipitously, mirror the Cyclorama's exposed duct work, which floats above them. The columns, designed by Galston, play as large a role in "Bound" as the four dancers do. The music, Henryk Gorecki's "String Quartet No. 2," is at once thrumming and angular, and it, too, functions as a character, the way the weather does when it's particularly violent or soothing.

Bennett has broken the 45-minute dance into three sections: "Unraveling," "Grounded," and "Arising," as if her intention is to show a kind of emotional progression — along the lines of Elisabeth Kubler-Ross's five stages of grief — in the power struggle that is her central theme. She places the dancers on stilts, at first sparingly and then altogether, to give physical form to the idea. The overall conceit is an ambitious one — and it sometimes doesn't work. The integration of the columns and the movement — a concept with so much promise when the lights come up and, cupped inside a column, three dancers are

BOUND

Presented by Bennett Dance Company,
Boston Center for the Arts
At: *BCA Cyclorama, last night. Program continues through tomorrow*

seen hanging from one "stilted" one, like so many grapes on a vine — is not nearly complete enough. And there's too much sameness in the sections: Each begins to drag about three-fourths of the way through.

Yet before they get to that stage, there are many striking moments. Bennett's movement vocabulary is full of impulses and sharp points, overarching arches and quasi-grotesqueries. The dancers, in red tights and leotards topped by armorlike black vests, seem to have no spines — or rather, because they move so *completely* from their spines and centers they're able to maintain perfect balance even while their torsos pitch this way and that. It's a remarkable sight: One dancer on stilts twirls a grounded partner beneath her, as if she's controlling a marionette on strings. Three dancers pull themselves along the ground by their forearms, their backs arched. Two, belly to belly, lean far back, like the petals of a flower opening.

Bennett is an original — something rare these days. Her instincts, as far as creating a whole world and evoking a mood, are impeccable. What we need to see now is *more* of her invention in each dance; she hasn't yet stretched herself to her limit.