

## SHE'S IN THE MONEY

By BARBARA HOFFMAN

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THEY say art can be rewarding. Sara Juli is ready to prove it, offering her life savings — in \$20, \$50 and \$100 bills — to her audience.

For "The Money Conversation," running Wednesday through Sunday at PS 122, the 27-year-old dancer has withdrawn \$5,000 — bringing it to the theater for six interactive performances aimed at raising hard questions about cold cash.

She counts it, scatters it, rolls around in it, picks it up with her toes and pulls it from her clothes.

In a way, it's like Scores, only in reverse — this time, it's the dancer who's shoveling out the bills:

"There is money in my right pant pocket," she says. "Take it. It's for you. How much is it? How does it feel?"

It feels pretty weird, actually — at least it did for some of those who attended a recent rehearsal, performed with \$1 bills instead of the larger denominations.

Juli's betting it might — which is why there's a box onstage in which theatergoers can return her cash and maybe even add some of their own. (ATM envelopes have thoughtfully been slipped into the programs.)

"There will be people who'll take the money, but there will also be other people who give," she says.

Granted, the \$20 ticket price should deter stray panhandlers. Even so, she says, she's prepared to lose everything — but hopefully not early in her run.

"I have no backup plan," she says. "I guess I'll have to borrow."

The money isn't really her life savings, concedes the Skidmore College grad, whose day job is raising funds for Dance Theatre Workshop. She inherited it a few years ago from a great aunt.

Nevertheless, "This money is my safety net, and if I were to get fired, dumped or thrown out onto the street, this is all I have."

Not only that, but she needs it for her wedding.

Happily, her fiancé — and producer and director of "The Money Conversation" — is all for it.

"Sara was always on my ass about money," says 31-year-old Chris Ajemian, a director, writer and doctor's son who moonlights as an SAT tutor.

"She'd say, 'Get a 9 to 5 job,' and I'd say, 'I don't need a job, I need to create a consistent cash flow.' "

Whenever they had "the money conversation," Juli got antsy, cranky — or clammed up. But while other women turn to therapy, she makes "healing dances."

Her previous pieces include "How to Forgive Yourself in Bed," about taking one lover too many (that was BC, Before Chris) and "Burden," in which she reconciled a promise she'd made to her Holocaust-survivor grandmother with her love for a non-Jew, i.e. Chris.

"And it worked," she says of the last, happily. "We're getting married!"

But about that \$5,000:

"I'm not going to lie — I'd be very upset if it all went. I think it's going to be hard for someone to walk out the door with someone else's cash, but we'll see."