



Fluid moves ... the dancers move in unison at first, then pair off. Photo: Jeff Busby

## MERCURY

CRITIC'S RATING **9/10**  
**SYDNEY DANCE COMPANY**  
**SYDNEY THEATRE,**  
**WALSH BAY**  
 UNTIL NOVEMBER 28  
 TICKETS \$20-\$70  
 BOOKINGS (02) 9250 1999

FINNISH choreographer Kenneth Kvamstrom is the friendly face of conceptual dance. Using gestures from everyday life, humour and fluid movements, his works are non-narrative and free of overt meaning but they're not impenetrable for a non-dance audience.

He's been in Sydney working with the Sydney Dance Company for nine weeks and the result of their collaboration, *Mercury*, is a shimmering display of pure contemporary dance.

It starts with a single bell tone, like a call to prayer, a male dancer crouches on the floor. His naked

back slowly unfurls, each rippling muscle defined. He contorts his body, twisting his fingers and arms like a vine searching for the sun.

When the lights rise, all 10 dancers take their place in a pristine white box with a large disc suspended at its centre. The huge circle is like an extra character on stage. Sometimes it is a giant eye watching the dancers, sometimes a searchlight, a mirror or a dark moon. It's a stunning effect.

Kvamstrom favours continuous, flowing movement that keeps its dancers close to the ground. Each move slides into the next, with the dancers appearing to melt into each other. Lifts rise and fall like waves, bodies crumple into the floor and roll almost silently.

The 70-minute work is divided into three parts, inspired by the different meanings of "mercury": quicksilver, the messenger god and the planet.

The dancers, dressed in smart black, move in unison at first,

appearing neither male nor female. Then couples emerge. The mood is both tender and tense: women lift and hold men; men lightly step on women. A stroke of the neck or a light touch behind the knees seems to release an ecstatic response. Dancers Emily Amisano and Richard Cilli are outstanding in their pairing.

In one vigorous section, the dancers shine like rock stars – sexy, arrogant and mocking. Connor Dowling and Kynan Hughes dance like they're in a nightclub, high on the pounding music.

*Mercury's* electronic soundtrack (by George Gorga) veers from airless sci-fi drone to dry, whip-crack beats reminiscent of Kraftwerk. The lighting and set (by Jens Sethzman) could easily find a place in a contemporary art gallery.

Unlike Wayne McGregor's arresting abstract ballet *Dyad 1929*, currently danced by the Australian Ballet at the Opera House, *Mercury* is a work of sensual beauty. A world-class performance. Don't miss it.