

Friday March 26, 2010

DANCE

Sum of parts greater than their whole

NEW CREATIONS

Sydney Theatre, March 23
Until April 10

Reviewed by Jill Sykes

TWO new works by different choreographers, strong dancers, attractive music – including a commissioned score – and designers drawn from the fashion world: the Sydney Dance Company's latest program has much to recommend it.

Adam Linder's *Are We That We Are* establishes the evening's fresh approach with its starting point – which won't be revealed here – and he offers a succession of memorable sequences.

A long, fascinating partnership between "horse" and trainer, Richard Cilli and Emily Amisano, captures the balletic beauty of dressage and the tussle for power between human and animal, and a fragmentation of the "horse" into some other being – a centaur perhaps?

More seriously, it suggests mental and physical breakout from strict control, or to echo the choreographer's program notes, an altered state of consciousness.

Juliette Barton, a dancer of exceptional quality, has her moment of transcendence in a sequence where she seems to be lifted from a reclining position on the stage by unseen wires – a feat of arresting beauty and imagination.

The sleekly muscled Linder himself partners Charmene Yap in a sensual duet illustrating the union of two bodies as one – an engrossing engagement of entwined limbs and torsos which came so close to fully

clothed simulated sex that observing how they avoided such an audience age-limiter became an unwanted diversion.

Nick Schlieper's fast-moving lighting design animates the stage. Jordan Askill has the cast in street clothes, most often a sexy combination of tight jeans of loose tops. Varied musical sources fit the sound bill designed by Adam Synnott.

Rafael Bonachela's *6 Breaths* is a close collaboration with composer Ezio Bosso, whose engaging music reaches the audience in recorded form with clarity and balance. The breaths of the title embrace Bosso's medical problems, the spring-board of dance and life itself.

Again, there are sections of intensity and beauty that will stamp themselves on your mind. For instance, the solos for Richard Cilli and Alexander Whiteley, and even more so their duet, which is sensitively nuanced and powered by mind as well as body. Annabel Knight is also a notable contributor.

The work is clad in Josh Goot's neatly understated look-alike costumes and bookended by Tim Richardson's exquisite videos, in which giant images of two dancers are formed by leaf-like fragments on a screen, only to disappear in a breath of air. They make up for the way Bonachela's choreography for all 12 dancers tends to deteriorate into aimless action at the end.

Ultimately, I felt that neither choreographer got quite as much out of his work as its best qualities deserved. This may have something to do with structure. It certainly wasn't a problem with the dancing.

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