

Australian stage **Giselle | Fabulous Beast Dance Theatre**

PRINT EMAIL

Written by **Amanda Tyler**

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Daphne Strothmann. Photo - T Charles Erickson
Dance Theatre. Hmm...maybe Deathre? Thance?
Physical Theatre? All of the above? Yes!

No messing around here – this gutsy adult's only adaptation of the ballet **Giselle** is amazing and not a tutu in sight. The story is so engaging. It has everything – lust, deceit, danger, sex, adventure, zombies...

Okay so they are the "spirits" of women scorned, but they could also be Zombies.

Giselle started right on time. No waiting around for habitually late Perth audiences. Good on them. The first half of the production is a bit of drama, a bit of comedy, a bit of physical theatre. All the themes of the story are introduced in a seamless and entertaining way, no spoon feeding.

The second 'half' (there is no interval) is all dance and physical theatre. I am known to be a little dance phobic, but this was really amazing. It sounds macabre to say that a story with a fair amount of suffering, drama, violence and 'adult themes' can be made beautiful, but it most certainly is.

It is men who feature in some of the female roles and the great thing is that it doesn't make an inch of difference what the actor is biologically because the acting is so smooth that the audience doesn't even notice. Nobody sticks out as being awkward or uncomfortable, the whole production reeks of highly skilled (and multi skilled) actors, dancers and singers who really enjoy what they are doing and have zero qualms or hang-ups. It's refreshing to see dancers who can actually act, actors who can actually sing and singers who have the physical awareness and training to do all of the above.

No one person is better than the other here – they are all marvelous to watch. **Lorna Randi** is *Nurse Mary* and has one of the most spectacular sets of legs I have seen in a long time. She cracked the audience up as the hardcore, no nonsense *Nurse*. **Angelo Smimmo** has a spectacular singing voice, it's absolutely gorgeous. **Milos Galko** had some beautiful subtle tones as *Albrecht*, the bisexual line dancing teacher from Bratislava. **Daphne Strothmann** is a pretty little *Giselle*, again with such 'real' feeling and intention that she makes us feel as if she really is poor, downcast and preyed upon. They are complex characters – each one with their own clear pep and strong 'personality' (if a character can have personality), but struck down somewhat by small town syndrome and in circumstances that they just have to make the best of. **Michael Dolan** was so psycho as *Hilarion*, *Giselle's* dim but very dangerous brother that it was spooky.

There is not a single bad thing I can say about this production, even if I go through it with a fine toothed comb. All the technicals are effective also – the lighting is subtle and makes great use of shadow, the stage itself is deceptively useful, there is very little set but it's just not needed because the performances are so good. The music is fun but melancholy, then spooky, chilling and striking. It never gets in the way (by being too loud for example), but mashes and melds with all the other aspects of the performance and creates something so unspoiled, it's rather dazzling.

This is not a ballet for children or romantics. It's not a ballet full stop. It's a marriage of so many aspects of theatre. It is what it is. And what it is, is stunning.

Fabulous Beast Dance Theatre presents
Giselle

Directed by Michael Keegan-Dolan

Part of the 2009 Perth International Arts Festival

Venue: Perth Convention Exhibition Centre Pavilion 6

When: Sat 28 Feb–Sun 1 March, 7.30pm

Tue 3–Sat 7 March, 7.30pm

Sun 8 March, 2pm

Duration: 1hr 20min no interval

Prices: A Reserve \$60/Friends \$50 B Reserve \$45/Conc \$40 C Reserve \$35

Bookings: 9484 1133 perthfestival.com.au Festival Info 6488 5555