



# Quarry sets the stage

## DANCE

Ballet at the Quarry  
 WA Ballet  
 Quarry Amphitheatre  
 Review: Tim Balfour

How do you know when you're experiencing a great evening of dance at the Quarry Amphitheatre? When you're watching the dancers onstage and not the glittering cityscape below, of course.

And this year, the dancers of West Australian Ballet will hold your gaze — most of the time.

Kicking off the evening's program is Cass Mortimer-Eipper's *It Is*. Dressed in shimmering blue and red unitards, two factions of mannequin-like dancers move to the chest-pounding techno beats of *Itchee* and *Scratchee*.

Mortimer-Eipper's choreographic sequences are inventive and the dancers' movements sharp, accurate and musical. Frequently the dancers' isolations made limbs look both rigid and liquid simultaneously. It may have been better placed after interval to break up the high quota of slower-paced works.

Setting a more lyrical tone is choreographer Timothy O'Donnell's *Door No 1*, where dancers languidly traverse the stage to the atmospheric music of Yann Tiersen. O'Donnell achieves an arresting aesthetic, but the piece was occasionally marred by some dancers' lack of unison or poor musicality.

The strongest choreographic sections of *Door No 1* are in the latter stages, where the men seamlessly move — lifting, rolling, sliding — as a single entity.

American artist Tobin Del Cuore's

Consider the *Raven* is a recently choreographed solo work for leading artist Daryl Brandwood. Dancing to the musical works of Andrew Bird, Jon Brion, Yo-Yo Ma and Bobby McFerrin, Brandwood initially eats up the stage with feverish arm thrusts and leg slides.

Despite the increasingly internalised and serene choreography leading Brandwood, unusually, to the edge of the stage, he continues to maintain a commanding presence throughout. As the solo comes to its quiet end, he, with a measured muscularity, contorts his arms into an unearthly shape, wing-like, before subtly exiting from the stage. His performance is hauntingly beautiful.

Melbourne choreographer Timothy Harbour's *Fractal Joy* is an abstract, neo-classical work creating pleasing balanced forms and formations.

Glow sticks are integrated into the work, and at one point a dancer wearing a glow rope skirt chaines diagonally across stage like a fluorescent sea creature. But these novelties didn't hide some appallingly out-of-sync group sections. Despite the fluid performances of Mortimer-Eipper and Fiona Evans, *Fractal Joy* didn't quite have the choreographic spark to be engaging enough to the end.

Danced to the folksy guitar sounds and dulcet tones of Devendra Banhart, Spanish choreographer

Alejandro Cerrudo's *Lickety-Split* is a capricious piece representing the fickle nature of young love.

*Lickety-Split* involves three couples engaged in some rapid-fire dance moves that harmonise perfectly with Banhart's evocative tunes. You can see that each idiosyncratic move created by Cerrudo has been carefully considered; nothing wasted or throwaway.

Overall, the trio of couples form a very tight-knit group, and the lead couple, relative newcomers Mathias Deneux and Sophie Fletcher, are especially wonderful to watch.

Natalie Weir's *Lacrimosa* is an extravagant, melodramatic work, but set to Mozart's *Requiem* what else would you expect?

Dressed in luxuriant purple costumes cut to puritanical measure, *Lacrimosa* is filled with a brooding undercurrent of liturgical dread. Lined up shoulder-to-shoulder across the stage, the full cast of dancers create an awesome spectacle as they crash, wave after wave, in cannon at the front of the stage.

Typically, Jayne Smeulders performs some commanding solo work. The *pas de deux* choreography, however, is just OK, and Smeulders and Christian Luck worked well with what was on offer.

Overall, Ballet at the Quarry is an exceptional night of dance, performed by a company of highly tuned artists.

**Ballet at the Quarry runs until February 28.**



Shimmering: Yann Laine, Joseph Simons, Meg Parry and Mathias Deneux in the high-energy piece *It Is*, choreographed by Cass Mortimer-Eipper. Picture: Joli Green