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PERTH INTERNATIONAL ARTS FESTIVAL

One out of three ain't bad

GENEVA Ballet may be Swiss-based but, like so many companies, it takes its dancers from all points of the globe. The names and faces in the program tell an eloquent story of coming together from different backgrounds for a common purpose: Yukari Kami, Madeline Wong, Sarawancee Tanatanit, Prince Credell, Fernanda Barbosa, Giuseppe Bucci, Grant Aris (from Perth, as it happens) . . .

This diversity is the foundation and meaning of *Loin* by Antwerp-born Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui, whose stimulating background as a Flemish-Moroccan with Muslim and Catholic influences gives his work unique shape and texture. *Loin* (which means Far) is the main work in Geneva Ballet's Mixed Bill, not only in length but in significance. It hits Saburo Teshigawara's *Para-Dice* and Andonis Foniadakis's *Selon Desir* right out of the park.

Obviously Geneva Ballet artistic director Philippe Cohen thinks the three go well together because he has presented the same bill before, but the difference in choreographic achievement is striking. It goes without saying, of course, that the dancing is splendid: there are so many fine dancers in the world and Cohen has his fair share of the talent.

Teshigawara can be an extremely provocative dance-maker but here, to a pleasant but not particularly memorable "sound creation" from Willi Bopp, he sends out four men and four women to swirl and undulate attractively. They never look anything less than sophisticated and delectable but this is a minor, albeit tasteful, piece.

Foniadakis comes close to sacrilege by using

DANCE

Ballet du Grand Theatre de Geneve
 His Majesty's Theatre, Perth, February 17.
 Tickets: \$30-\$60. Bookings: (08) 9484 1133. Ends tomorrow.

choruses from Bach's St Matthew and St John passions for some of the most incoherent choreography I've seen in many a year. He designed the costumes, too: skirts for both men and women — yawn — in the ugliest colours imaginable. To be fair, the opening night audience seemed exhilarated by the nonstop gyrations. I found the enterprise tedious.

At nearly 50 minutes, *Loin* is twice the length of the other two works but seems to flash by in half the time, and to immeasurably greater effect. Cherkaoui treats dancers as actors and individuals, giving them text and song as well as plush and sinuous movement decorated with elements of great delicacy and intricacy. The music, extracts from the glorious Mystery Sonatas of Heinrich Biber, is a wonderful counterpoint. (This is music much favoured by choreographers but not often used so intelligently.)

The point and purpose are found in so many memorable images: the opening image of two men entwining arms; the gentle, repeated touching of foreheads together; a funny on-tour vignette related by the company in unison; the final huddle of bodies.

Far from home, perhaps, but irrevocably part of humanity.

Deborah Jones