

A THOROUGHLY UPLIFTING EVENING

PRINT VERSION



Tempo Festival of Dance 09

[Tertiary Colours](#)

Choreographers: Shona McCullagh, PJ Lee, Patrick Sunderhauf, Phillippa Pidgeon

at TAPAC Theatre, Western Springs, Auckland

Until 2 Oct 2009

Reviewed by Julia Barry, 1 Oct 2009

The future of dance in New Zealand is in very good hands if the talent and creativity of the dancers, choreographers and production team associated with **Tertiary Colours** is any indication. This eclectic mix of dance works encompasses a range of dance genres and styles, including elements of contemporary and cultural dance, jazz and classical ballet. It is both gratifying and reassuring to see the high calibre of performance work being created at the five major tertiary dance programmes represented here.

The opening piece is *Woven*, choreographed by Juanita Jelleyman from the University of Auckland to music composed by James Bryant and to 'Tuia' by Ariana Tikao.

This well-crafted and carefully rehearsed work weaves together many recognisable movement motifs from Māori and Pacific cultures. These, and other 'threads', are seamlessly linked with fluid contemporary dance choreography. The hauntingly beautiful vocals of the early part of the music give way to percussive rhythm changes and later to a yearning melodic line overlaying the continued rhythmic pulse.

The dancers respond to the music and underlying themes with strong dynamic awareness, fluid use of the spine and a powerful 'presence' which draws the audience into the atmosphere being created. The nine female dancers are costumed in simple, floating chiffon draperies, in the muted colours of nature and the lighting enhances the subtle shifts in musical and physical qualities.

The spoken words at the end of the piece draw together the various 'threads' of culture and heritage past, present and future "woven through time by our ancestors and now us" - and explain the title of the piece.

In contrast is *Hokkai Bayashi*, set to music of the same name from the album **Japanese Drums** by dancer, choreographer and teacher, Patrick Sünderhauf.

This vibrant and energetic piece is performed with a combination of elegance, power and dynamic variety by Pamela Sidhu of East Auckland Performing Arts School. The strong technique, clean lines and expressive use of the entire body demanded by the choreography showcase Sidhu's ability to move like liquid silk.

The insistent drum beat of the music is partly accompanied by the delicate sound of the flute, which is reflected in the simultaneous pulsating drive and generous breadth of the choreography. There is a stunning moment when a searching upward action of the arms suddenly cuts into a defined contraction of the torso - beautifully shown on Sidhu courtesy of the bare midriff afforded by the basic yet effective costume.

A captivating piece, equally matched by its performer.

Next is a stylish and slick jazz dance piece in the movement style of iconic jazz and musical theatre choreographer, the late Bob Fosse. *Sing, Sing, Sing* has been deftly adapted by Apollo Theatre School Director Sarah Boocock, from the musical *Fosse*.

The effervescent energy and obvious enthusiasm of the dancers is infectious and is well shown through the trademark Fosse moves of stylized arm, hand, shoulder and hip movements, crisp turns, high leg extensions and effortless leaps. The dancers are elegantly costumed in sleek black dresses, chokers and, with a further nod to Fosse, long black evening gloves.

A striking and entertaining piece.

Human Scenery really is what the title says it is! Choreographed by Phillippa Pidgeon, dancer, teacher and choreographer lecturing at AUT University, the piece is set to the elegiac music of Respighi's **Adagio con variazioni**.

The choreography evokes a series of gracefully arranged sculptural groupings, sometimes 'still lifes' and sometimes 'moving sculptures'. The soft, expressive qualities of the choreography are very sincerely interpreted by the dancers who show amplitude of arm movements and carefully sustained adagio elements.

That some dancers are performing 'en pointe' provides an extra dimension and variety to the choreography, without detracting from the overall fluidity of the piece. The costumes are simple and effective, with black bat-wing blouses, accessorized with small individualized features.

Themes of curved shapes and movement pathways, contrasted with elongated lines and intricately choreographed groupings, recur throughout the work, giving an impression of 'perpetual motion' by the large cast of capable dancers. The muted mauve tones lighting the

cyclorama provided for the dancers' ever-moving silhouettes to enhance this illusion.

Whisper, choreographed by Ai Fuji-Nelson and Juanita Jelleyman of the University of Auckland to the music '**Aquarelle**' by Rene Aubry, is a contemporary dance duet performed with conviction and clearly delineated roles by the choreographers.

The piece traces the awakening, progression and denouement of a personal relationship. The 'feminine' (assumed due to the costume of a simple, layered cream dress) character's self-absorption within her own world is portrayed in the opening section, where she, bathed in a pool of light, makes subtle, light touches of hands to floor, arms, torso, whilst whispering to self.

The more assured and 'emotionally articulate' character gradually draws the reluctant 'withdrawn' character into a series of evermore expressive physical interactions and emotional communications. The music marries well with the developing theme. Inevitably a point is reached where the 'reserved' character is faced with a decision whether to embrace all that the relationship has to offer or to return to her private world.

Those Left is choreographed by Shona McCullagh, to Gorecki's '**Largo Sostenuto Movement 1**' and is performed by students from Unitec.

This is a powerful work, with dark thematic undertones emphasized by the music - a continuous urgent pulse overlaid with a haunting and at times searing melody. The choreography interacts with the music with layers of fluid movement underpinned by or returning to representation of the ever-present and insistent base rhythm. The lighting throughout effectively expresses the sombre mood.

A simple, yet striking opening group formation with rhythmic swaying action is enhanced by the grey hooded dresses and highlighted by the solo performer, Anya Lomakina, being costumed in rich purple. Group and partner interactions move from sculpted on and off balance shapes, intricate lifts and inter-twinings, through smooth and fluid transitions, into more aggressive movements. The floor and the air spaces appear to be as one, with the dancers' generously articulate bodies gliding seamlessly between the two, melting and melding into and away from the floor and each other with a sinewy and sensuous quality.

There is a particularly arresting moment, with all dancers taking beautifully extended and sustained arabesque lines, with Lomakina lying curved around another's legs, as though seeking protection. The dancers perform with a magnetic dramatic intensity which is totally absorbing and quite mesmerizing to watch.

Apollo Theatre School closes the evening with the fiery and energetic *Latin Fever*, choreographed by Sarah Boocock to a compilation of '**Viva Latino**' and Ricky Martin's '**Samba**'.

This is all glitz and glamour, shimmer and shine, highlighted by the cheekily frilled black

skirts and neat bolero jackets offset by accents of bright red. Swirling hips, correspondingly mobile upper bodies and arms, co-ordinate with the driving rhythms clearly marked in the footwork.

The dancers' strong performance style and high energy commands the audience's attention and playfully invites everyone to join in the fun. Cabaret-style jazz at its best - a light, bright, bubbly ending to an excellent programme.

Tertiary Colours is truly a celebration of the development which has taken place in the dance education field in recent times, a living testament to the exceptionally hard work of the many dancers, teachers, choreographers, producers and educationalists who have been instrumental in facilitating this progress over many years.

A thoroughly uplifting evening - the future of dance in New Zealand is indeed in good hands.