

Fri 8 January

taciturn, The Artful Badger, Ivan Blackstock

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- Taciturn** *Worst Case Scenario*
- The Artful Badger** *In-Side-Out*
- Ivan Blackstock** *Reverie*

The minimal programme note of **taciturn's** *Worst Case Scenario* left much room for interpretation. However, the choreographic collaboration listed instilled an expectation for a piece which was meaningful and full of form, reassuringly delivered. The three dancers - ultimately engaging in their personas utilised throughout - created a partnership which bounced over the stage as they educated the audience in sublime to ridiculous methods of surviving worst case scenarios. The comic elements were fresh, not contrived, with effortless and unpredictable lifts flowing seamlessly. The recorded and live voiceovers subsequently created an energised vibe for the pieces left to follow.

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Next up, **The Artful Badger's** *In-Side-Out* depicted a world dominated by seemingly animalistic yet ultimately humanised emotions. *In-Side-Out* seemed to be missing something, despite being overrun with a birdsong soundtrack, live accompaniment, arguably narcissistic movement and huge coloured false eyelashes, incomplete both in terms of music and the kinaesthetic. A distance was maintained from the audience, despite the flats being flown out from the space, with the hiding of the dancers' eyes consequently dehumanising them. A mostly aesthetic duet between the white and black 'birds' was also played upon in the development of movement, making way for a habitual curiosity inevitably translatable to the human audience.

Ivan Blackstock's *Reverie*, full of humorous acknowledgement, staged the common problem of losing a quilt to another and became a naturally choreographed human issue of night-time, complete with more live accompaniment. The male character's routine of entertaining the loss of quilt was broken by his clothes making a twilight bid for freedom from his wardrobe, in turn executing commendable routines. A morphsuit-come-tracksuit wowed with hip hop 'flava' and a skirt became an extremely sensual being, distracting us momentarily from the apparently angelic sleeping partner. The use of clothes to demonstrate the dancers' talent meant *Reverie* was far from ostentatious, with humour skilfully masking Blackstock's clear passion for entertaining.

Jessica Wilson

Liverpudlian trio **taciturn** do not live up to their name. *In Worst Case Scenario*, these three warm, witty women play out a series of 'How to...' scenarios – like what to do when there's an earthquake or your parachute fails to open – calmly attempting to divert disaster with a result that's somewhere between a public information film and *Smack the Pony*. They hoist each other's bodies through absurd situations with a real sense of unity between the dancers. It's simple, readable, well-made and it makes you smile. That's pretty good going.

We meet a second female trio in *In-Side-Out* by **The Artful Badger**, but this is a very different world, more wildlife documentary than comic newsreel. Here are three exotic birds: proud peahens channelling 20s showgirls, all ruffles and bustles and fantastic feather eyelashes.

Against the twitching, chirping piano of composer Theo Vidgen, playing live on stage, our creatures engage in display and petty squabbles, games of one-upmanship, copycat antics and chasing of tails and shadows. Again it's a simple idea, lucidly and kookily realised.

There's another complete change of scene in **Ivan Blackstock's** *Reverie*. Blackstock is best known as the founder of hip hop troupe Birdgang, but this piece is a nice example of the fact that artists coming out of hip hop are making an incredibly broad range of work these days. Broad is the word for *Reverie*, actually, when it comes to the humour at least. A comic, bedroom-set skit complete with dancing tracksuits and a haunted wardrobe, the humour is mostly gentle slapstick, not far off panto at some points – that whole 'who's hogging the duvet' schtick is hardly original – but it's charmingly done. And when Blackstock actually gets round to some dancing, his liquid-limbed talent is there for all to see.

Lyndsey Winship

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La Tipica, Taragano Theatre, Moving Dust

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La Tipica *Cambiar de Piel*
Taragano Theatre *Chrysalis*
Moving Dust *Sometimes There's Light*

Providing a dramatic opening to the triple bill of performances was **Natalia García-Huidobro's** *Cambiar de Piel*. Live musicians instantly established the atmosphere using layers of rhythm that intensified and developed alongside the foot stamps, sharp turns and intricate hand movements of the flamenco/contemporary solo. This addictive, percussive accompaniment provided a core throughout the different sections of the piece. It moved the work through intimate, tender duets to passionate solos under the two spotlights as if it was dictating the choreography. All of this resulted in a captivating piece that commanded your attention.

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Chrysalis, choreographed by **Mariana Taragano**, carried on the musical emphasis with a live flutist and cellist that accompanied the four dancers, a collaboration that, on stage, did not necessarily add to the overall effect of the work. It begins with Taragano writhing underneath a red cloth before the transition from a toddler learning to walk, to a body conscious teenager, to finally a woman looking for love. It is depicted very cleverly through the use of comedy, theatre and pedestrian gestures, whilst the red cloth becomes a skirt, dress and lover's bed sheet throughout. Tunde Olasupo's Hip Hop background is evident, providing an innovative take on the choreography.

'One day the remains of my liver will float in front of the remains of my face'; a striking opening line to **Kate Sagovsky's** *Sometimes There's Light (Sometimes There's Dark)*, which deals with the equally striking concepts of love, death and the fear of it. It has a Christopher Bruce's *Ghost Dances* feel to it, with a masked 'death' figure (and an angel) ever-present and manipulating the other dancers' movements. It is very astute choreographically, with spoken prose dispersed with fluid travelling phrases that move seamlessly between different levels. Occasionally it does not use the most subtle of ways to convey the theme, but it worked, delivering a thought-provoking end to the evening.

Laura Warner

Resolution! often highlights the new and the wacky, but **La Típica's** *Cambiar de Piel* shows the virtues of a strong, articulated tradition: flamenco. Natalia García-Huidobro embodies the classic tensions of the form: curlicue arms wrapping a held torso, a composed demeanour set against furious footwork. Five musicians frame her like shadows, their strums and claps and flares of song imprinting the dance dynamic. There are certainly departures from convention: García-Huidobro is in underclothes, and a searching, understated narrative sees her migrating between squares of light, briefly donning the flamenco skirt of Romanian singer Monooka, who acts as a kind alter ego. Interestingly, this otherwise very assured piece seems to founder over the "outsider" figure of Monooka, as if uncertain how to incorporate her difference into its flamenco world.

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Live musicians also feature in **Taragano Theatre's** *Chrysalis*. The opening sees flautist Eva Caballero, dressed as a male construction worker, sidling up to seductive, silken-haired cellist Natalie Rozario – a schematic image of heterosexual desire that's rendered more subtle by the flirtation, intertwining and final coming-together of their melodies. The piece then plays out a parable of femininity: Mariana Taragano is "born" from a red cocoon, educated in decorum (the musicians give her scores to read), discovers her boobs and falls for a man (Tunde Olasupo) before discord sets in because – well, basically, because they're not a hard-hatted builder and a silky siren. The piece certainly makes its point, but the music throughout is more sophisticated than the choreography.

Music – from sea-shanties to Patti Smith and Schubert – also outclasses choreography in **Moving Dust's** *Sometimes There's Light (Sometimes There's Dark)*. Beneath a banner of the Grim Reaper, four performers (two in white facepaint) unravel various threads on the theme of death. There are images of flight, of drowning and horizons, but the action is very diffuse, and leans heavily on associations in recited poetry and in the music – intimations of mortality, love and transcendence that reach far beyond the means of the dance material.

Sanjoy Roy

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Thu 10 January

Adagioconbrio, Rebecca Evans, theMiddletonCorpus

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- theMiddletonCorpus** *Behind closed doors*
- Rebecca Evans** *Subliminal Effects*
- Adagioconbrio** *Approximation*

An unsatisfying night in which the dancers did their best in quintets by two novice choreographers whose work sandwiched a trio of sorts by a more experienced maker.

Anthony Middleton's *Behind closed doors* for **theMiddletonCorpus** was inspired by the horrors of private/public life in an age of overexposure and information overload. Five studious, white-faced and identically-clad young women oozed and spiralled close to the floor to Middleton's own muffled percussion score. Stealthy, coven-like group unison was broken up by a solo and a couple of duets. It was competently crafted if,

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perhaps, too much in the Hofesh Shechter mould.

Consciously or not, Wayne McGregor seems to be among budding choreographer **Rebecca Evans'** role models especially in the bird-like pose her cast repeatedly adopted in the first section of *Subliminal Effects*. The dancers were adept interpreters of Evans' often angular physical language, none more so than Lisa Hood, but it was only when the soundtrack switched from tingles and beats to artily antic rhythms that the dance itself started to wax more purposeful. Joshua Van Egdome's smart black-and-white costumes were a plus but an initial spurt of smoke and flashy lighting (devices Middleton also deployed) was more annoying than subliminal.

AdagioconBrio's *Approximation* was aptly named. This was indeed an approximation of tango minus its stereotypes but also lacking in cohesion and, crucially, style. Pity, because it had potential. At first the stripe-suited creator Adriana Pegorer partnered a wittily long but unruly pink boa, then did a patterned walkabout with an attitude-drenched woman in a black fringe dress followed another, weight-bearing and contact-influenced encounter with a less characterful second female. Pegorer can be commended for subverting genre expectations by neutralising typical tango tropes, but this episodic, under-rehearsed and poorly-lit piece needed more tension and juice.

Donald Hutera

 White faces, demonic shadows and haunting sounds made for a piece that was reminiscent of a Tim Burton film. Rigid, distorted limbs and stooping inhumane postures added to the construction of a sinister ambience that both disgusted and enthralled in *Behind closed doors*. Natural tilts of the head, distorted foot movements and swift jerking arms clearly outwitted the more flamboyant shapes made by the bodies. Splayed hands were a simplistic and effective stimulus for a section that involved all five female dancers, highlighted by the precise lighting choices. These subtle, quirky aspects left you with thoughts of mental instability and destruction.

Approximation provided a visual dissection of tango, delivering a new insight into the structural frame of this dance style. A female, dressed in

nostalgic attire of a Latino male, performed a solo using a elongated pink feather boa that encircled her body, slowly pulling the feathers through her frame, a clever muse that did not connect well with the stage. Decadent costume and elaborate music were soon stripped away to leave the beat of a metronome for accompaniment as the two women repetitively displayed a few basic steps. Although an interesting concept it was difficult to understand the rationale behind the artistic choices and to deduce what issues the choreographer had intended to portray.

A heavily charged atmosphere was instantly established as red block lighting illuminated the backdrop to reveal pulsating silhouetted figures. The choice of accompaniment clearly underpinned the movement score as jutting limbs and snaking torsos were brilliantly executed in a forcefully dynamic style. The fast pace was briefly interrupted by a necessary stylistic change, letting their wings glide as if moving through water the slow rippling torsos had you entranced. A sense of urgency soon returned with the addition of eye contact and a sense of connectivity between the dancers, both of which only strengthened this tenacious abstract work.

Esther Loxham

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Ji-Eun Lee, PanicLab, B-Hybrid Dance

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- PanicLab** *Throb: A Cardiovascular Romance*
- Ji-Eun** *Play.Back.Again.Then*
- B-Hybrid Dance** *Independently Dependent*

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An evening of mainly unshowy, low-key emotions began with Joseph Mercier's simple, literally heart-felt piece of gentle physical theatre *Throb: A Cardiovascular Romance* for **PanicLab**. The mainly floor-based 'action' is contained by a set of hospital curtains framing a duet between Mercier (the carer) and the Tim C J Chew (the patient). The latter's glow-in-the-dark heart sits in a jar. The only other props are a pillow and the washing bowl Mercier uses to sponge bathe Chew. A silhouetted kiss indicates the pair's burgeoning relationship, as does a bit of a music box rendering of Elvis's early hit Love Me Tender on the soundtrack (a subtle mix of instrumentation and 'found' sound).

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From Mercier's sensitive meditation on human vulnerability, need and healing connection we transition to **Ji-Eun Lee's** study in isolation and depression. The notably un-dancey solo *Play. Back. Again.* Then is akin to a performance installation. Lee, a slip of a young woman with a focused presence, sculpts three blobs of orange clay into totemic objects. She also uses both masking and cellotape to enclose these crude alter egos. Eventually she walks away, suggesting that a person can be more self-empowering and unboxed than she might either imagine or allow herself to be. The piece leaves a residue even if Lee loses points by resorting to piano music to sentimentalise her listless stage persona's implied feelings.

Independently Dependent for **B-Hybrid Dance** was apparently motivated by consideration of the stifling pressures exerted on youth. This information didn't much influence my perceptions of a work anchored by a quite pleasing duet. Casually and identically clad, the ponytailed Alexandra Buchanan and Eloise Sheldon slipped across the stage like a living Rorschach test. Afterwards a supporting quartet (including choreographer Brian Gillespie) reeled about as if reacting to the unsettling effects of a force field. The piece ended with group movement set to a striking a cappella track by American indie folk duo The Pucketts, for which thanks are due.

Donald Hutera

Introducing the fourth night of Resolution! was **PanicLab's** *Throb: A Cardiovascular Romance*, depicting the double life which results from living with illness. The ever-poignant duet was shut off from the outside world, delivering the private life which comes with both caring and coping with the patient, marked by the literalness of the hospital-esque staging. The speed at which movement was performed in the first instances was highlighted by the later deliberated movement, conveying a sense of gradual deterioration, second guessing the patient. The resulting protective security highlighted the minimalistic yet drawn out placing, and replacing, of a pillow to make the patient comfortable, constantly clutching at his life source: a heart in a jar.

Space was also marked out in **Ji-Eun Lee's** *Play. Back. Again.* Then. Lee's impressive biography meant heightened anticipation was unprepared for

her post-modern and almost self-indulgent approach to exploring the "self", "being" and "ego", using clay models. However, suggestions of unknown identity emerged, both through Lee's minimal expression appearing faceless by stretching her dress across her head, and the human notion of categorising in order to identify and define. Despite the lack of technical dance vocabulary, Lee's work provoked thoughts of human creation for our wants, rather than our needs.

B-Hybrid Dance, in turn, delivered a bittersweet revelation of the innocence of childhood play, and its gradual disintegration in *Independently Dependent*. Five spotlights on five sets of stilted movement gave way to a flashback of fun in a strong duet by two of the female dancers. The movement, stylised and competent, showed off their artistry and the talent of the choreographer in combing elements of commercialised lyrical and Release-based movements. With the other dancers returning to the stage, the power of their lines was luxurious in response to both the restraint of leaving childhood behind and the subtleties of the score, created in response to the movement.

Jessica Wilson

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Attach Dance Compnay. David Willdridge, Yuyu Rau/Liz Liew

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- Liz Liew and Yuyu Rau** *Snapshots*
- David Willdridge** *Leave Elegance to the Tailor*
- Attach Dance Company** *Divide*

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Liz Liew and **Yuyu Rau's** *Snapshots* was marred by technical glitches, although one wonders whether it would have been that much stronger had all gone according to plan. While the variety of live music was stimulating (a special mention goes to the Chinese zitherist), the danced interpretations of the emotional states alluded to by the music and projections were too simplistic and literal to be compelling. The individual vignettes lacked emotional force, and the whole was not greater than the sum of its parts.

The voiceover that opened *Leave Elegance to the Tailor* left me wondering

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if we were in for another clichéd love duet. I need not have worried. The soft but powerful movement vocabulary, which was repeated enough to provide continuity but not enough to be tedious, drew me in. The partnerwork was solidly executed and surprisingly inventive; it kept me guessing. More importantly, it communicated something of the complexity and subtleties of a two-person relationship without falling into the trap of sentimentality. By the time the pair returned to their starting phrase, there was the sense that it was more than a neat choreographic device with which to end the piece; they seemed to have actually been somewhere.

The power and energy of the dancers in **Attach Dance Company's** *Divide* was exhilarating. This, together with the tight, dynamic choreography made for a piece that demanded your attention. It did mine, and for the most part it held. But despite arresting individual moments, there was not enough beneath the sharp execution and powerful teamwork to excite. The silences seemed to lack purpose (except perhaps to allow the audience's brains to catch up) and the loose, changing subgroupings of the four performers didn't lead anywhere; the concept of 'divide' seemed more a superimposed dictionary definition than a strong choreographic underpinning. Nevertheless, the quality of performance from all four dancers carried *Divide* to its end well.

Elise Nuding

Nostalgia is the flavour of the day, what with David Bowie balancing on the zeitgeist by pondering where are we now? It was that very question, albeit translated into the first person, which floated through **Liz Liew** and **Yuyu Rau's** autobiographical collaboration *Snapshots*.

This was a musician Liew's life played out in movement by choreographer/dancer Rau and there was an endearing honesty in their interplay. As Liew's keyboard melodies flooded the stage, Rau echoed key passages from childhood to first love to motherhood. It was ambitious and charming - but frustratingly episodic. Every time the action built a flow, we moved on elsewhere. It would have been nice to have heard more of Dennis Kwong Thye Lee on the Chinese zither, surely one of the most evocative sounds in world music. So, even at 25 minutes *Snapshots* left me wanting to know more, to dig deeper into this intriguing story.

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'I've lost sight of us,' intoned the voiceover at the opening to the obliquely-titled *Leave Elegance To The Tailor*, a duet which found choreographer **David Willdridge** joined by Daniela B Larsen to trace the arc of a love story. That's a much travelled road, but there was a contemporary edge to this affair, the lovers wrapped up in each other and unravelling as the emotional rollercoaster hit highs and low. One caveat: they needed to let us into their story more, and dance for the audience not just themselves.

Attach Dance Company's *Divide* hit the stage running like the director's cut of a Gap TV ad, all sharp edits and hyper-active walking skips. It was a bolt of sharp energy, a welcome fizz of adrenalin in a night that had been tipping over into introspection. But while *Divide* had a beginning and a middle, it seemed to be missing an end. If they learn to pace themselves, choreographers Andy Macleman and Drew Hawkins are ones to watch.

Keith Watson

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Camila Gutierrez & Fionn Cox-Davies, Cesilie Kvernland, Darren Royston, Taira Foo

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- HINGED** *RainMan*
- Camila Gutierrez & Fionn Cox-Davies** *Accomplices*
- Cesilie Kvernland** *(parentheses)*
- The Nonsuch Dancers** *Rexesexus: Tudor Dirty Dancing*

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- Fri 15 February

Two short pieces standing in for a last minute cancellation made for an even more varied Resolution! experience. And indeed the fertile partnership of **Camila Gutierrez & Fionn Cox-Davies**, final year students at The Place was a Valentine's Day treat. In their jaw dropping duet, they raise contact improvisation to new heights of daring and

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athleticism, all in five minutes. Drawn together as if by a magnetic force, they effortlessly cartwheel and surf over each other, using every conceivable body part, in an astounding display of counterpoint and balance. Imbued with chemistry and mischief, their relationship is a winner from start to finish.

Not so uplifting, (in fact strikingly depressing), is **Cesilie Kvernland's** (*parenthesis*) performed by the post-graduate students of EDge. Looking like the Furies of Greek Mythology, the black-clad dancers cluster gloomily together, occasionally erupting into sculptural poses or grimacing gestures. Sombre lighting and brooding music adds to the heavy mood of this short work. Very effective in conveying isolation and foreboding, (*parenthesis*) is successfully alienating.

The eleven accomplished dancers of **Hinged** open the evening with *RainMan*, a touching dance drama about the relationship between two brothers, one of whom is severely autistic. Choreography, music and film evoke the American settings in which each part of the story takes place, ranging from a soulless care home in the mid-west to the hedonistic gambling dens of Vegas. While the technical standard is high, much of the unison dancing is manic, unsubtle and over the top. There's too much music visualisation and not enough variation in dynamics. However the brothers' duets are intensely moving, interweaving intricate, complex movements with convincing acting.

Finally, a scheming Earl of Essex, his sexually frustrated Queen and sexually active couples (all cleverly encrypted in the title *Rexesexus*), gallivant round the stage in a pithy tale of the shenanigans at large in the court of Elizabeth I. In full Tudor garb, accompanied by live musicians, **The Nonsuch Dancers** are experts in their field, mastering not only Pavaues, Galliards and the raunchier Volta but Elizabethan etiquette and hilarious text. Soon polite courtly dancing is sullied with 'unclean handling' and 'filthy groping', quickly degenerating into a bawdy romp. There's even some fencing thrown in to add to our enjoyment.

Josephine Leask

Having not seen the iconic film, this set myself at a somewhat disadvantage for viewing **HINGED** company's *RainMan*, which, as it says on the tin, is created around scenes from the motion picture. The piece

begins peacefully with a male soloist tracing shapes in the air with his finger, a movement that becomes an effective recurring theme. This atmosphere is then shattered as Green Day's *American idiot* blasts out, and an army of brightly coloured dancers jolt us in to the rest of the narrative. The innovative choreography is gripping to watch; nonetheless it sometimes feels chaotic and indistinct with so many dancers moving quickly in unison. As well as skilled performers, the cast prove themselves as actors with the brothers' duet being particularly expressive and beautifully formed.

Next, *Accomplices*, a collaboration between **Camila Gutierrez and Fionn Cox-Davies**, creates a more subdued mood. Based around contact improvisation, the duo spin, collide and whirlwind around the stage. They smile and chase each other, the dynamics of their movements and the rapport between them giving it a playful quality. But do not be fooled by this air of blitheness, the effortless lifts and partner balances they achieve are remarkable.

Part of EDge Company's 2013 touring repertoire, *(parentheses)* by **Cesilie Kvernland** begins starkly with six females in a press up position, rocking back and forth under a dim spotlight. It progresses to having the dancers standing, silhouetted against a warmly lit backdrop which allows their intricate hand gestures to be emphasised. These slight motions prove visually effective against the overall stillness of the choreography. Although there are powerful moments, the piece feels quite prosaic.

Despite expecting a Patrick Swayze-like figure to jump off the stage whipping everyone in to a frenzied dance number, *Rexesexus: Tudor Dirty Dancing* incidentally is a history lesson in 16th century courtship dances. Complete with a suited lecturer in front of an Apple Mac computer, the piece successfully uses comedy to convey its theme. **The Nonsuch Dancers** cavort around in period costumes whilst a lady in an ill-fitting red wig observes. The elders look on in disgust as the 'La Volta' descends in to raunchy duets of 'kissing, fussing and smooching' and the men produce a dance of 'masculinity' which ironically consists of tip toe prances, leaps and skips. Irrespective of its bizarreness, the piece worked well and provided a light-hearted end to the evening.

Laura Warner

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Tue 15 January

Mazzilli Dance Theatre, Tom Bowes Dance, Chris Pavia

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- Chris Pavia** *Captured By the Dark*
- Tom Bowes' Dance** *Brute*
- Mazzilli Dance Theatre** *For How Much*

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The evening got off to an assured start thanks to **Chris James Pavia's** dramatic duet *Captured By the Dark* (a title presumably derived from Dougal Irvine's cosmic/cinematic soundtrack). Hannah Sampson with her hourglass figure showed muscular grace tumbling about a bare stage lit by Sarah Gilmartin in moody amber, blue and lavender. At first Sampson was closely observed by the equally strong Tomos Young, but soon the pair fell into almost mutually consuming, spiralling lifts. Seething and strenuous? Yes, but the dancing was sure-footed. Eventually an accord was reached that led to an indelible closing image.

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Some dances irritate from the get-go. Consider **Tom Bowes'** quartet *Brute*, which featured more astral music (by Francis Western-Smith) plus dry ice galore. (The latter, alas, seems to be a staple of Resolution! 2013.) Buttoned-up in black, with flared skirts and ankle boots for the three women, the clench-bodied cast twitched internally before tentatively breaking out of its initial downstage clump. After picking up on each other's moves they wound up exactly where they began. All of this was meant to be about 'four peculiar characters who delve into the uncertainty of the unknown.' Egad, the vague pretension!

Events took a socially-conscious turn via (Annarita) **Mazzilli Dance Theatre's** *For How Much?* From the (overcrowded) bar a greedy-pawed, lizard-tongued actor-dancer ushered us into the auditorium. There eight others mainly occupied a prison-like square of light, shuffling about with raised arms but individually dreaming of escape. The piece's stated topic was 'human trafficking for forced labour,' hence the clothing later used to mummify a woman plus an encounter between rival female consumers over a pretty pink dress. Coins were another prominent prop, while fake smiles and assembly-line actions figured among the behaviourally-inclined performances. It was all a tad worthy but, yes, thought-provoking with a not uninteresting live/recorded score by Andy Higgs.

Donald Hutera

The evening began with *Captured By The Dark*, a sensitively danced, sliding and revolving duet defined by moments of close proximity and occasional whispers of contact work. Though somewhat limited in vocabulary, their partnership held a tactile engagement with the space pockmarked by fleeting yet often powerful images including frantic grasps and a hypnotic unison circling on the floor. I longed however for some of the more visually arresting images to solidify, and for the partnerwork to leap more wholeheartedly into action.

Four blank-faced yet pouty dancers occupied the dimly-lit space, clad in

black leather and lace. Dramatic pauses, swipes and lyrical writhing only served to reinforce the outer-space-emo vibe suggested by their attire. Fragments of counterpoint and unison appeared and dissolved with a certain organic satisfaction, but the generic movement material followed the music's pulsing rhythm too closely without revealing its essence.

Tom Bowes' *Brute* could unfortunately be best characterised by its own programme note: "four peculiar characters who delve into the uncertainty of the unknown". This strange idiomatic phrase mirrors the work's "is what it is", mentality and Bowes' under-explored vocabulary served an ultimately disingenuous concept. I couldn't help but leave thinking, "so what?"

For How Much? began in the bar with a suited performer, Donovan Morris, announcing to the dazed audience: "settle down... we should all be able to squeeze in", all flicking tongue, snaking fingers and pained, toothy grin. A satisfying unease was cultivated. From here the work's themes of exploitation and forced labour emerged and Morris became 'Mr Capitalism', sneering and lurking over his workers, an amorphous group who moved with subtle urgency and focus. Coins and piles of clothes served as effective yet perhaps overly-simplistic representations of the theme but were often abandoned before a clear physical idea was realised. Mazilli bypassed opportunities to be poignant, and was too preoccupied by hammering home her simple proposition with what seemed to me as blatant objectivity. The work was conceptually sincere and bold in intention but, like the previous two pieces, the dance lacked complexity.

James Morgan

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Wed 16 January

Monica Nicolaides, Ryota Kodera, MurleyDance

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- Monica Nicolaides** *Nu.V.Na,*
- Ryota Kodera** *Yamato-Nadeshiko*
- MurleyDance** *La Peau*

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Fusions of forms, from martial arts to dance theatre to Japanese aesthetics, are in evidence in tonight's works, a trio of dances that each contain some good ideas but fail to really take off.

First up, **Monica Nicolaides' MonixArts** with *Nu.V.Na*, a combative quartet of women in white polo neck leotards looking like some sort of futuristic fencers. They engage in forceful stage fighting, complete with

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round kicks and leg sweeps, which supposedly represents the conflict between nature and nurture, but the battle lines are not clearly enough drawn. The four dancers work hard, but need more finesse and fizz. Ultimately there's not enough dynamic and the tone is too samey in this deadlocked duel.

There's also a glint of the warrior in **Ryota Kodera's** *Yamato-Nadeshiko*, which aims to encapsulate the Japanese ideal of womanhood: soft and steely at the same time, a ninja core beneath a polite exterior. Kodera combines classical style with elements of Japanese dance – purposeful, ritual, elemental – and the trio of women carefully present their poses. There's lovely use of stillness and unison and the cross-cultural blend continues in the music in Japanese reversions of Debussy and Ravel. It's an interesting meeting of forms, although it feels slight, but perhaps that's the stark Zen aesthetic.

Finally, **David Murley's** *La Peau* (Skin), which feels more an over-thought-through response to a brief than a complete piece of choreography. There are a lot of interlinking themes, a lot of influences, a lot of styles – bland ballet, emotive contemporary, comic dance theatre, and another one involving a handyman-cum-stripper. It's too eclectic really, and the shifts of tone are jolting. Choosing Adele's *Someone Like You* to soundtrack a couple's will-they, won't-they union is brave, and respect goes to Lauren Bridle, who goes all-out to give the physical equivalent of Adele's belting voice. Her partner looks terrified. The one that really works is the witty scene that turns a batty old woman into Botticelli's Venus. More like this please.

Lyndsey Winship

MonixArts' *Nu.V.Nu* opened the evening with a spot lit solo, and it seemed we were in for a treat. Dancer Hayley Chilvers expertly embodied the martial arts, violence, athleticism and smoothness of the piece. The solo was mimicked by a duet that fought and then became a quartet that ticked and flowed. However, it was disappointing that the influence of martial arts on the movement didn't include the energy needed to match Burner's sharp electro score. The work never quite climaxed to the anticipated physical struggle and tension.

Yamato- Nadeshiko describes the ideal Japanese woman, fragile and strong. In the second piece of the evening by **RK Dance**, this concept seemed to settle at the use of balletic form and never quite developed. It is rare nowadays on a contemporary stage to see frontal formations danced in unison, but why not, especially if they are performed by three lovely ladies, with even lovelier butterfly sleeves. The solos were the highlights in this piece, demonstrating a greater range in dynamics and movement vocabulary; the Japanese influence became more than just a light dusting.

La Peau (Skin) by **MurleyDance** was a four-part play inspired by four famous paintings of nudes. Opened by ballet dancers holding mirrors in an attempt to portray vanity; and a lyrical duet to Adele's *Someone like you*, which made me want to cry out "he's just not that into you". The following section was, in comparison, a triumph: witty, succinct and poignant. 'Slutty' nurses guided the aging Zimmer frame bound Venus around the stage, encouraging her to use the giant oyster shaped piss pot. Finally, *Death* came with a dancer stood atop a ladder dressed as a decorator. He slowly un-popped his dungarees and performed moves out of the Eric Prydz *Call on me video*. It was another humorous offering from David Murley, and to top it off, Simeon John- Wake has a great arse.

Maddy Morgan

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Thu 17 January

The Mostly Everything People, Wide Eyed, Tiffany Gibson & Virginia Munday

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- The Mostly Everything People** *My Way/This Way*
- Wide Eyed** *At the still point of the turning world*
- Tiffany Gibson & Virginia Munday** *Things to make and do*

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The first and last were works of physical theatre that drew inspiration – and much humour – from our failure to communicate. The jam in the sandwich was a promising debut for a company exploring the potential of pure dance. Overall, it was a girls’ night out since all eight dancers were women: the only two men on stage supplied live music and – in

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one case – a sizeable slice of comedy.

It took me a while to catch on to the charm of *My Way/This Way* but I was won over by the four protagonists, each carving a character from the briefest of material. Snippets of text about paper swans and a lost necklace built a picture of friends talking to each other but not listening. When asked to “do that impression” by Laura Williamson, Christopher Preece tries to oblige but, each time he starts, her butterfly mind has wandered. Preece has a clever sense of timing and a sardonic delivery that set me in mind of Ricky Gervais, an allusion encouraged by the beard. This engaging cast was completed by Megan Armishaw as the introvert and Virginia Scudeletti, who had the best of the dancing.

This was the first outing for **Wide Eyed**, a Brighton-based dance company led by Emmeline Cresswell who made *At the still point of the turning world* in response to the eponymous section of T.S. Eliot’s *The Four Quartets*. Leit motifs for this dance quartet were battery operated lamps that they carried and placed in geometric patterns on the floor. Cresswell’s swirling choreography made effective use of the space and – aided by the creative input of Sarah-Elaine Stewart – she achieved an evocative, moody work that didn’t overstay its welcome.

We could guess that Tiffany Gibson and Virginia Munday were rival presenters on a children’s’ TV show when they try (unsuccessfully) to sing the nautical theme tune to *Blue Peter*. They also fail to make something out of plastic cups and balls of tangled string and, although the sticky-backed plastic was missing, there’s even a “*here’s one I made earlier*” moment. Mutual bossiness leads into a hair-tugging contest and there is a moment of shock-inducing laughter with a particularly, surprising and venomous facial slap. It was a significant moment of theatrical impact in a mature performance by two well attuned and responsive artists.

Graham Watts

An armchair, lamp and stool set the stage for *My Way/This Way, Mostly Everything People’s* quirky but sensitive look at interpersonal discomforts. Three female flatmates sit lost in reverie and blurred exchanges, whilst the fourth flatmate, Christopher Preece, provides percussion, ukulele and droll commentary. Failures of communication

translate well as slow distortions of voice and face, awkward collisions, the performers swooning off to their own little worlds. The actual dance sequences slip deliberately in and out of synch. But pervasive spoken word – muttered fragments, lost tails of tangents – build cohesive texture and a rueful mood for the nicely subtle ending.

No awkwardness in sight with **Wide Eyed's** *At the Still Point of the Turning World*. Four accomplished dancers work around four flat, portable lamps, in a state of brimming enchantment. Emmeline Creswell's broad compositional vision prevails with the fluid unfolding of robust, graceful moves. Yet moments of wispy sensuality recur like little miracles in the midst of such vigour: a finger stroked along the inner forearm in attentive wonder; bodies perched on their tail bones, four limbs floating upward like wavy, marine plant fronds. The reference to Elliot's poem is a perfect seed. In less assured hands the lamps might have forced too restrictive a concept, but here dance overflows and does what it does best: expresses the ineffable.

Friction returns *in Things to Make and Do*, a comedy of false starts by Tiffany Gibson and Virginia Munday. With crafty props and yellow earmuffs, the pair quibble and scramble as they launch and abort a string of DIY nonsense projects. Repeated frustration rises to tussling, then verbal abuse, and peaks in a vicious, hair-pulling catfight to the sweet live accompaniment of piano accordion. All hits fever pitch in a rhythmic, self-face-slapping duet that shocks and burns them out. Not dancey, but a canny portrayal of love/hate and neurotic compulsion.

Jessica Sabatini

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Fri 18 January

Interdigitate, Jordan Massarella, Benjamin Ord and Paolo Mangiola

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- Jordan Massarella** *The #Visitors present a '#Visitorial'*
- Benjamin Ord and Paolo Mangiola** *Take me home and make me like it*
- Interdigitate** *Does My...Do I*

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Titles are clues that can reveal or obscure. *The #Visitors present a '#Visitorial'* is the achingly clever name of **Jordan Massarella's** desperately satirical quintet, a thing of dissonant lounge music, outré costumes and strained ironies that in lieu of insight succumbs to the values of the repellently shallow, vacuum-like celebrity culture it's targeting. At the start a handful of vulgarly glam, zombie-like young people thaw out of exaggerated poses. Two of the scantily-garbed

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females then share a shouty, mechanical duet. At the climax a crazily grinning woman is the increasingly frantic centrepiece of a brief, endlessly repeated show biz routine set to Abba. The cast goes for broke but the ideas haven't been sufficiently thought-out either kinetically or linguistically. The piece waxes idiotic about mass-media idiocy.

From the Random Dance stable come **Paolo Mangiola** (shaggy-locked, broody yet jumpy) and **Benjamin Ord** (a taller, silkier mover) with the tantalisingly ambiguous, refreshingly exploratory *Take me home and make me like it*. Clad in t-shirts and white trousers, the men use two long, black wooden bars to help define, measure and sometimes contain what seems both an abstract yet implied relationship. I may not agree with every creative choice but, hallelujah, they can dance. Something valuable is being conveyed here about human connections and how intimacy is expressed, or withheld. A short film of a pair of pups playing in the sand makes an unexpected and charming coda. A duet I'd gladly see again.

Entertaining, lively, even a little edgy, **Leda Franklin's** *Does My...Do I?* (Excerpts from) features a game cast of eight and a varyingly naked but wonderfully at-ease, sixteen-strong ensemble on the sidelines. Cosmetic surgery, body dysmorphia and dating are examined mainly via a pretty sharp spoof of reality shows plus a couple of vigorous group dances. Others, notably Protein Dance, have mined this territory before but that doesn't invalidate Interdigitate's performance. The finale, a gauze bandage Maypole dance, is a beauty.

Donald Hutera

Choreographer **Jordan Massaralla's**, *The #Visitors present a '#Visitorial'* introduces five performers each attempting to reach their celebrity status quickly, ridiculously and with no care for what they have to do to achieve it. The Versace inspired male, pink haired burlesque performer, girl in a bikini, lady in black and the chap in small underpants, all standing atop high heels display a collection of camera-ready posed pictures. There is sound and some movement, although nothing that can traditionally be called dance. The performers are each dedicated to their own story, not necessarily to one another and it feels as if the piece has

lost its way. The last section is by far the strongest; finally the audience connects to the Euro-trash fun happening on stage.

Take me home and make me like it choreographed and performed by **Paula Mangiola** and **Benjamin Ord** is a duet that at times clashes and clunks with unfinished movement, lines and choreographic choices. Elsewhere it shows consideration, delighting and surprising us. The dancers express tenderness and compassion in their movement, but at times they are uncomfortable to watch. It's almost as if neither dancer wants to be there. It's hard to tell if this is a choreographic choice. The use of two black planks of wood further serves to frame the story that is unfurling on stage. The piece ends with a short film of two puppies playing in the sand together. One can't help but feel if the dancers were to spend more time rehearsing this type of play, the choreography would be clearer

A cast of 24 including a sixteen-strong chorus who have courage enough to stand naked, or semi-naked, alongside dancers illustrate the story of beauty and the lengths to which individuals and groups will go in *Does My...Do I*. This piece is a mixture of scripted theatre and dance. Although elements intermittently are rushed, noisy, unfinished and bombastic, it has something. Its wildness, freedom, humour and clever use of props and big cast, all tell the tale of not only the beauty culture we inhabit, but of choreographer **Leda Franklin**, who successfully draws excerpts of modern culture from the pages of magazines and TV screen and perceptively translates them to the stage.

Gail Schock

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Sat 19 January

Matthew Robinson, Georgia Tegou, Anna Watkins/WatkinsDance

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- Georgia Tegou** *Yet Another Day*
- Anna Watkins** *Inseparable*
- Matthew Robinson** *Vacant Skin*

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Georgia Tegou's *Yet Another Day* brought us a neat pastoral meditation on the subject of human existence based on Albert Camus' *The Myth of Sisyphus*. Accompanied by four flautists, the theme of purpose seeking existence was played out through a series of deftly done juxtapositions between four dancers, four chairs and four balls of twine. However, the gentle head tilt backwards repeated throughout the piece proved at times visually more arresting. It ended with the lead dancer being saved by the group from falling off the proverbial cliff. So, there is such a thing as society after all.

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Anna Watkins' *Inseparable* took us on the journey of a male-female relationship. What unravelled before us was a story of love, lust, abuse and betrayal with an inevitably tragic end. At least that is what Watkins' narrative led us to believe. What we actually saw was a high energy acrobatic partnering of bodies intertwined in romantic canoodling to ecstatic over-head lifting and longing lunges. Sadly, this breathless flow of activity left no room for more nuanced characters and story. The pumping beats of Ritchie Hawtin aka Plastikman were overwhelming and arbitrary, contributing only to attitude winning over substance. Perhaps this piece would work better with no music at all, leaving only body encounters to create its soundscape.

Matthew Robinson clearly wants to go places. He wants to be shown in grown up theatres with sophisticated audiences that enjoy McGregor's *Random Dance* and are now looking for 'the next big thing' of abstract physical nature. Delivered by three female dancers who were moving deftly across, away and into the floor, *Vacant Skin* was set to explore female obsession with the body image. But the intensity of choreography turned the dancers into futuristic looking Amazonians rather than women struggling with their insecurities and quest for true identity. There is a danger to canonise one's work before it has even started. Robinson should watch out for that.

Mil Vukovic

Georgia Tegou's *Yet Another Day* has a striking squared-up structure: four flautists accompany four dancers holding four balls of string tied to four chairs beneath four lamps. Almost as striking are the music (breathy sputters, atonal runs) and the trajectory: separate episodes knotted together by blackouts while the flutists converge onto a single pitch. Least striking is the dance itself. Each scene elaborates different motifs: the dancers winch themselves towards the chairs, sit like enigmatic statues, unravel string through splay-legged rolls. But action and imagery lack the focus of the admirably strong framework, arc and accompaniment.

Anna Waktins' *Inseparable* is marked by the characteristic strengths and weaknesses of her parent company, Tavaziva. Dancers Ellen Yilma and Petro Treklis (also from Tavaziva) chart a couple's relationship from post-coital tenderness through fighting, indifference, tenderness and finally to an almost brutal display of need as Yilma continues the duet even after her partner's body has become lifeless. The action is full-blooded and intensely felt, its headlong swoops and knotty lifts cut with gestural detail: a trembling hand, an impatient brush-off. It packs a punch, but relentlessly so, leaving little room for nuance, or breathing space for the audience.

Matthew Robinson's *Vacant Skin* has the creepy feel of a Japanese horror film, and depends as much on sound (dense chordal crescendos, smudged with static) and on video (scratchy, jump-cut portraits of women, paper sheets flying upwards) as it does on dance. A lone woman extends the twists and glances on screen into slashing sweeps and gut-wrenched curves before she's joined on stage by two others, like doppelgangers. The trio stride and strut, crawl and hunch, knitting and reknitting snippets of each other's action together; two women face off as if in an imaginary mirror. It's big on atmosphere, imagery and phrasing but its numbers – three women on stage, two on film, one on both – don't seem to add up. Robinson could do with some of Tegou's tauter correspondences.

Sanjoy Roy

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Tue 22 January

AlottaFagina, Elena Jacinta, Charlie Dixon Dance Company

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- Charlie Dixon Company** *Long Road*
- Elena Jacinta** *Pieces of Mosaic*
- AlottaFagina** *We are made of stories....*

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A political undertone was present in *Long Road* as images of war were shrunk into a tiny box and projected on to the backdrop, a sensitive topic for any choreographer to grapple with. Heavily accentuated breathing accompanied a male dancer flinging himself on the ground in an overly dramatic start. Such exaggeration and unnecessary pained facial

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expressions were consistent throughout and consequentially removed sincerity from the material. The eerily, beautiful live music supported a simple side stepping pattern with the dancers facing the audience, as the piece finished with a subtlety it probably should have begun with.

Pieces of Mosaic began as the audience entered, a popular choreographic choice this year at Resolution! The three female dancers seemed oblivious to our presence as they warmed up and stretched on stage, a fitting start for a piece based around ideas of performance. After a virtuosic solo performed by a highly skilled dancer I thought I could predict the outcome of this piece. I was happily proved wrong! A section full of quirky gestures and kooky facial expressions brought a new dimension to a work that kept on surprising as each dancer personified their own expression of performance.

The female duo were already lost in their own world as the audience entered and they remained locked inside it for the duration of *AllotaFagina*. It was a work that told a story- both through the dancers and the narrative voice that set the scene for us. Every element held importance as they performed cross legged on the floor; from the flicker of an eyelid to a sweeping outstretched arm, you found yourself truly believing in the imagery their bodies conveyed. Flawless dancing surfaced a raw, unorthodox aura that produced melancholic emotions, it connoted ideas of friendship, lovers or even intimacy. Like two schoolgirls

playing they were engrossed in one another and I am unashamed to admit that as this emotive piece came to an end, I shed a tear.

Esther Loxham

The opening solo of *Long Road* is gripping: Robert Keates twitches in agonising spasms. His naked torso emphasises his vulnerability as he shivers with trauma in a pool of light. A woman suddenly approaches him out of the darkness. The problem that **Charlie Dixon's** trio faces thereafter is how to sustain this intensity. Horrific images from the Vietnam war flash up in a tiny window on the cyclorama, as if keeping them small will reduce their impact. It doesn't and the underwhelming choreography unfortunately can't compete, in spite of being propelled by the atmospheric accompaniment of two violinists. Clichéd physical information intended to convey tragedy, such as neurotic scratching, followed by plodding introspection, reduces the urgency that *Long Road* might have delivered.

In sharp juxtaposition, the choreography of *Pieces of Mosaic*, riveted and surprised from beginning to end. Three unbelievably sinuous dancers, oozing with technical ability and confidence, present a mish-mash of movement fragments. Snippets of ideas inform the splintered contents which the women present in various amalgamations. Virtuoso technique in one section is contrasted with a comical gestural motive in the next. It begins to look like a game of charades. Can you guess what this action signifies or what happens next, the performers quizzically seem to ask. No, I can't and that's what makes this piece a bemusing winner.

The scene is heavy and dark. The smoke machine works its gloom-inducing magic once again. **Victoria Hoyland** and **Karima el Amrani** enforce the feeling that many of us have during this time in January: utter depression. However although nothing much seems to happen in their slow, grounded, disconnected duet until the end, they each have a story to tell. It's just impossible to access it as they connect neither with one another nor the audience, existing in parallel worlds. It's a relief to see them finally hug, an action that melts into the floor and suggests an awkward union of two split personalities. But it's not convincing.

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Wed 23 January

ARC, Sounding Motion, Tara Saclier d'Arquian

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- Arc Dance** *A Sense of Beauty*
- Tara D'Arquian** *May our bodies become bodies again*
- Sounding Motion** *Naturale*

This was a splendid uplifting programme of dance that sent me home on a freezing January night with all the joys of a long hot summer.

It got off to the very best of starts with Suzie Birchwood's *A Sense of Beauty* for **ARC** (the professional performance wing of ActOne ArtsBase).

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Danced on and around a metal frame, comprising two large “stepladders” supporting either end of a horizontal track above head-height, Birchwood’s work met and exceeded the intent of its title. Inspiring, inclusive and incisive, it mixed passionate duets (one tenderly danced by Birchwood and Peter Baldwin); spoken text, narrated by Rosie Leak with an infectious sense of joy and wonder; aerial spins; and an eclectic orchestral accompaniment, played solo by Nao Masuda. *A Sense of Awe* summed it up for me.

This effective use of set design carried over into the next work, by Laban graduate, **Tara D’Arquian**, which was gloriously multi-layered in its rounds of repetitive movement, while the bare side-frame of a house elevation (with its important detachable door) was positioned around the stage to mark each new sequence. A seamless intermingling of performers and “stagehands” (who turned out also to be performers) added more skin to the onion; and the intense, insistent music by At Stations rattled the work along like a runaway train that never stops. D’Arquian appears to have a panoramic choreographic vision and a keen eye in picking excellent performers and collaborators. Belgium has given contemporary dance some of its very best creative talents and perhaps here comes another.

Imogen Bland’s *Naturale* for **Sounding Motion** did what the company’s mission says in the name with an elegant capsule of integrated live music and dance. Taking inspiration from Luciano Berio’s eponymous

composition for live viola and percussion accompanying the recordings of Sicilian folk singers, which is subtitled *action for dance*, Bland's four dancers gave an evocative account of Neapolitan women toiling in the southern Mediterranean sun. I felt their heat before trudging home in the snow.

Graham Watts

Inspired by the paintings of Chagall, there is much to celebrate in **Arc Dance's** *A Sense of Beauty*. A monkey-bar structure with A-frame ladders for ends dominates the stage, with silk chords hung from its centre. It's a versatile set for the four dancers of varying abilities, and invokes a playground dynamism. We witness luminous innocence and fascinating emotional transparency: friendships forged with facial expressions; animosity unravelling with the theft and pursuit of a shoe. A benign, peace-keeping presence is embodied by performer Rosie Leak. And a love story is danced with tender balletic drama, Suzie Birchwood dreamily buoyant in Peter Baldwin's arms.

May our Bodies become Bodies Again is **Tara D'arquian's** super-sophisticated portrayal of coupledness's repetitive traps. An elegant couple play out their clockwork 'routine' to metronomed music, amidst wall-frames and doors that are shifted periodically by extras. With building layers and driving momentum, the impression of swiftly passing years is given. The dance is inexorable and intense, the couple synchronised side-by-side or confronting head-on in

subtly mounting rancour. The picture widens to include a new couple (two females, one cross-dressed), and a single woman across the way with a dance/life of her own. This dilating perspective is tantalizing and wise – there is richness for more development here; and as it stands this stunning work feels just slightly lopsided or truncated.

Another supposedly 'monotonous' way-of-life is richly revealed with **Sounding Motion's** *Naturale*. Everything about this collaboration with musicians impressed me. It is a finely nuanced interpretation of composer Berio's work for viola, marimba (plus other percussion) and folksong refrains, depicting peasant toil in Sicily. The costumes are evocative yet understated, the lighting redolent of the fading Sicilian sun. The dancers swirl and lunge, raise their arms and faces to the 'sun', bow their heads and eventually drop one by one. But no 'acting', no narrative or sentimentality is required in a piece of such eloquent form and distinct musical colour.

Jessica Sabatini

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Thu 24 January

Tamzen Moulding, Fortu Angelini, Hanna Wroblewski

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- Fortu Angelini** *Me-Dea*
- Hanna Wroblewski** *My heart became this monster*
- Tamzen Moulding/Inverted** *Last Dance*

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It was an evening abundant with tortured redheads. The first three featured in *Me-Dea* by **Fortu Angelini**, a largely trivial revisit to the Greek myth of Jason and Medea. Three incarnations of the character spoke of blood and childbirth, wandering about the stage in floaty grey dresses. Angelini's painfully Graham-esque melodrama was hindered by its derivative score, which repeatedly enforced the work's misery. While the story traditionally ends with our fiery protagonist murdering her children as revenge for Jason's deceit, this version treated us to a tri-lingual, profanity-littered soliloquy about his refusal to `renew the

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fucking car insurance'. This surprising shift in tone was actually quite amusing, and annoyingly long overdue.

Hanna Wroblewski, our fourth auburn-haired performer, rose from the ashes of the previous work with an arguably similar tale of woe. *My heart became this monster* was infinitely more arresting in delivery however, and at odds with its strangely clinical blurb: "a solo based on non-verbal communication". The piece began with Wroblewski's exposed spine undulating to dramatic strings and dimly pulsing burnt-amber lighting - an undeniably beautiful image. She dragged her contorted body back and forth across the stage and later sat facing the now-lit audience, perhaps laughing or crying in a breathtakingly candid moment. Post-bow, she exited with an unexpected 'rock on' fist pump, revealing herself fully for the first time and waking me from my trance with a chuckle.

Our final crimson female, Kate McWilliam, attempted to tame her unkempt partner in a lively and often charming duet by **Tamzen Moulding**. For all its energetic personality however, *Last Dance* was as jumbled as Antonio Harris' character. Three fragmented sections were separated by lazily inserted blackouts. An over-repeated, tie-adjusting sequence suddenly became a swing routine scattered with acrobatic lifts, and before we knew it McWilliam was on the floor unconscious. I assume humour was intended, but watching Harris struggle to manipulate her lifeless body felt uncomfortably out of context.

James Morgan

It was a night that played like a tribute to Krzysztof Kiewslowski's fine movie *Three Colours Red*. Blood, anger and warning signs flowed as the three pieces, by sheer coincidence, saw red and all its associate emotions take centre stage.

Shading it, by dint of a fiercely committed performance, was **Hanna Wroblewski's** self-choreographed solo *My heart became this monster*. A little bit Butoh in approach, the auburn-haired Wroblewski, swathed in blood-drained robes, for the most part writhed and contorted on a twilight stage as tortured string music sawed away. She was portraying a wounded, feral creature, with a hint of danger. But then the lights went up and she sat, small and suddenly vulnerable, staring at us as we

gazed uncomfortably back. It was an arresting piece, making up in stagecraft what it lacked in clarity.

The emotions between Antonio Harris and Kate McWilliam in *Last Dance*, choreographed by **Tamzen Moulding** for **Inverted**, were much clearer. She was needy, he was feckless, but when they danced together their frailties vanished in a sweetly synchronized union. You rarely get a Strictly moment at Resolution! but this pair's gymnastic jitterbug deserved a 7 (seven!) - it needed more speed - and should have been the climax. Having McWilliam end the piece lifeless seemed added on as an afterthought, a jarring end to a piece full of personality.

Opening the evening we'd had **rAn Network** with *Me-Dea*. It's always a worry when you get random cApitals and hy-phenations in titles and companies. Look at us, we're wacky, it screams. This reworking of the Greek tragedy wasn't tacky, but it really didn't have anything fresh to add to an oft-probed trauma. As a cast of black-clad extras wafted about without portfolio, a red-dressed misery ran the usual gamut of emotional suffering. Her mates joined her at the death to moan about car insurance, which at least raised a smile.

Keith Watson

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Fri 25 January

Ieva Kuniskis, Nathan Goodman, Ceyda Tanc Dance

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Ieva Kuniskis *Gone to get milk*

Ceyda Tanc *Volta*

NRG Dance Company *Elsewhere*

The bigger the audience the greater the collective expectation? Maybe. In any case, The Place was packed for a bill marked by only partially realised ambitions.

Ieva Kuniskis' *Gone to get milk* had three reasonably engaging performers, an intriguing mixed soundtrack (including the haunting A Seancing Song by Broadcast and The Focus Group, and Goran Bregovic's jauntily seductive In the Death Car) and a simple setting featuring spilled oranges. But the purpose behind its intended balance of supposedly comically absurd 'dead end' domesticity was elusive and too

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much of the vaguely convulsive, gestural movement – mainly solos and duets – looked second-hand.

Ceyda Tanc's well-drilled female sextet *Volta* was an interesting conflation of Turkish prison protocol (apparently turning one's back on a fellow inmate during a walking exercise is a big no-no) and contemporised Turkish folk dance. Set to Seb Jaeger's boom/clash music, the moves of the handsomely and identically clad ensemble were sinuously expansive yet tight and sharp. But black-outs at the start were unnecessary and, more crucially, the walking sections from out of which the women broke lacked sufficient tension.

NRG Dance Company's *Elsewhere* was greeted with cheers even before it shot out of the gate. That's a lot to live up to but also indicates the regard in which choreographer (and moonlighting Richard Alston dancer) Nathan Goodman and/or his four fellow dancers are held. At first their blue-striped costumes suggested pyjamas – until, that is, you noticed numbers printed where shirt pockets would be. We were in prison territory again, with stretchy dancing that oozed across the floor to Stefan O'Brien's beaty score. One woman's modus operandi could be deemed sexy panther, but the over-all group impulse was more angry spider. Goodman is no Alston clone. His aggressively hard, fast fusion of modern dance with hip-hop and African traces effectively conveyed pent-up life-and-death challenges, and some of the shapes thrown were eye-catching. This angst-laden piece had a succinct drive even if my ultimate verdict remains inconclusive.

Donald Hutera

The evening began with oranges. Lots of oranges. Scattered across the stage by the first performer to enter the space, they provided a striking visual to open **Ieva Kuniskis' *Gone to get milk***. But despite occasionally acting as oddly interesting props, their purpose ended there; if they had a greater significance it didn't come through. The gestural movement was engaging, although some of the more literal actions (hand over mouth, for example) were clichéd and quickly became stale. The characters' anxiety, discomfort and insecurity was clear, their relationships less so. Although perhaps intentional, at times this ambiguity confused rather than intrigued. Nevertheless, there are interesting elements at work here, and with a little tightening and

clarification this piece could really compel.

Ceyda Tanc's *Volta* showcased the power and fluidity of the six female performers. Although captivating to watch, they started off at a level of ferocity and high tension that left them nowhere to go. This was a classically composed contemporary piece in which Turkish folkdance, Tanc's heritage cited as choreographic influence, was not a particularly strong presence. But then the world of contemporary dance has always embraced influences from traditional movement forms, and non-Western cultural influences are somewhat par for the course. If this is Tanc's signature, she should delve deeper and throw it at us.

Elsewhere featured five performers in blue and white striped clothing suggesting a prison environment. The movement was animalistic, with clawed hands a reoccurring motif, especially in the group sections. This was another classical composition: solos, duets, trios, a quintet—but there is only so much these changing groupings can convey. With the performers in constant battle with themselves, and others, and an overreliance on music changes to shift the mood, I left with a respect for the performers' tenacity and stamina but not much else.

Elise Nuding

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Sat 26 January

Mansoor Ali, nylon theatre, FrogHouse Dance Company

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- Mansoor Ali** *Medieval Minstrels*
- nylon theatre** *Revision*
- FrogHouse Dance Company** *Lost Men*

Mansoor Ali's *Medieval Minstrels* created a powerful energy, investigating the witch among us in transporting the audience to the trio's specific mind states. Spoken word and song integrated itself between their movement, interspersed with an animalistic quality, yet entirely human reactions. The technical use of 'minstrels' added little and was irrelevant, however, as the voices used could have accompanied the movement scenario regardless. The narrative framed much humour which wove its way into the almost villainous characters' thought trains, ready to extinguish the witches, drawing the audience closer. The rhythm of the piece was highly percussive and ironically ritualistic, aided

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by the movement and voice throughout. This lent itself greatly to the characterisation within the piece and the incredibly strong partnership between the three dancers.

The pedestrianised soundscape of **nylon theatre's** *Revision* provided a completely opposed view of humans. A pile of chairs dominated, perhaps a metaphor for memories we retain, which inevitably distort and teeter on the edge of being lost. Despite an interesting concept, the performance appeared bland and undeveloped, with much capacity to expand both the meanings and movement, which was unfortunately predictable through its repetitiveness. However, the isolation of one by a haunting duet not only demonstrated the inability to make contact either physically or mentally with what is locked in our minds, but also the poignancy of losing a part of you which is ultimately fleeting, rather like the art of dance itself.

Greeting the audience with haze-filled space, **FrogHouse Dance Company's** all-male cast presented more technical performances than previously, and were dominant in their strength and agility. The use of costume was specifically indicative of animalistic arrogance: feathers, bare chests and body paint gave way to testosterone-inspired lifts and floor-based Release work. There was even a pride to the movement vocabulary which only further supported the programme assumption of the masculine struggles for acceptance amongst a stoic civilisation. The group, as independent figures, fully portrayed the fighting alphas, and the lingering musical accompaniment only served to enhance.

Jessica Wilson

Three jolly minstrels go gallivanting through imaginary medieval landscapes, in hot pursuit of witches. Their gaiety and frolics portrayed through shrill but accomplished singing and rumbustious pedestrian actions are soon replaced with sadistic and blood thirsty banter about torture methods for these sought after witches. This whacky trio of performers in **Mansoor Ali's** *Medieval Minstrels* are a comical bunch as the play the buffoon. They're totally in tune with each other and have indomitable energy and pluck. However the fresh absurdity of the narrative fades. The Monty Python sketch which it might have become is replaced by an inferior comedy act.

A mound of chairs precariously piled up down stage and three women, self-absorbed in various activities, create a brooding Bauschian beginning to **nylon theatre's** *Revision*. A tender yet hostile duet between two of the dancers is watched by a third, who nostalgically fingers through a pile of clothes. While the movement material is hesitant and at times ponderous, there is also an intensity shared by the women. The stillness and thoughtfulness behind each action is a credit to the performers and there is an understated intrigue in the way in which they interact. This is a private world of a woman's memory, full of subtleties and glimpses of what might have been.

Masculinity, testosterone and explosive choreography shake us out of the cool shadows of female introspection and into the heat of the male jungle. The message is simple but effectively delivered. Eight sparring, athletic men in **FrogHouse Dance Company** demonstrate through fast-paced, technical manoeuvres, the strivings to become an alpha male. Adorned in red feathers and tribal war paint, the men could be characters from a modern day version of *The Firebird* meets *The Lord of the Flies*. The leader of the tribe, with his assertive command of the stage has a stand-off with a younger guy. His spongy, grounded agility is matched by the vertical alacrity of the other.

Josephine Leask

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Tue 29 January

Casandra Stelea, Ingrid Molinos, Jalianne Li

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- Casandra Stelea** *Other's Moments*
- Ingrid Molinos** *Besa Després*
- surFACE Dance** *In the Beginning...*

Stage left, in a circle of light, **Casandra Stelea** dances in loose Latin phrases. Just as we're being hypnotised by her moves her jealous boyfriend comes into the frame. 'Stop looking at her!' he shouts. And the more he says it, the more you can't tear your eyes away. It's a very strong start to Stelea's *Other Moments*, a duet about coupledness, performed with actor James Eggleton. What follows is togetherness, separateness, tension, repulsion, irritation and make-up sex, plus some quick-stepping partner dancing and slightly awkward audience participation. What it lacks is an intense connection between the two performers. They both play their parts well, but their two worlds don't

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quite collide.

Ingrid Molinos' *Besa Després* is inspired by the surrealist poems of Catalan author Joan Salvat-Papasseit. And you could certainly say it's surreal, as the bald, bearded man in breeches waves his stick at the audience and a clan of dancers glide past balanced on a wheelchair. Watching this is like arriving on holiday in the middle of some archaic local carnival where you have no idea what's happening, but then they all start smiling and whooping and wiggling and you just find yourself going with it and clapping along with an idiotic smile.

Choreographer **Jalianne Li** has hit on something: the face is a very underused body part in contemporary dance (its default setting being 'po'). And thus, in *In the Beginning*, Li's company of eight embark on an odyssey of gurning expressions, with mouths from Munch's *The Scream* and bodies going slow-mo like they're swimming through jelly. Sometimes the face leads the body – a mouth pursed so tightly it pushes the face forwards, or eyebrows arched so high they throw the head back. It's a genuinely interesting idea but sadly the facial focus seems to restrict the choreography, rather than enhance it. Perhaps there's a reason this hasn't been done before.

Lyndsey Winship

First up was **Casandra Stelea's** *Other's Moments*, which examined the theme of love through an actor and dancer pairing. A sensual salsa solo was interrupted by an interaction with the audience. "Stop looking at her" he shouted, and so ensued the tangled web of their relationship. James Eggleton played the 'East London, goes-out-on-a-Tuesday lover' with passion and commitment and was a surprisingly adept mover. There was a brilliant salsa duet, which thronged with tension and intricacy. However, because he had long musing monologues, his character seemed much more developed than hers. At points she was just in the space as a tool for him to bounce his neurosis off. Ultimately this led to a disjointed connection between the couple, and a slightly unbelievable struggle.

Ingrid Molinos' *Besa Després* was inspired by Catalonian culture and the surrealist poetry of Joan Salvat Papasseit; and it did feel very surreal. It was opened by the jolly skipping grey-haired and bearded Godfrey

Bleak, who was then joined by four peasant-robed young females. The girls tiptoed, tilted and tottered then repeated the movement a few more times until it ran dry. Maybe there was something in the poetry about a drought? The piece kept going in a similar vein until it became completely disjointed; a children's ballet class, a Catalan street party. Weird. Yet the dancers were committed whole-heartedly and it was surprisingly alright to watch!

The evening was drawn to an end by **surFace Dance**' *In The Beginning...* It opened strong and dark with chewing day-glow lips. But that gooeyness did not translate to the body and as more dancers entered the space two-dimensional form took over. The score by Tommaso Perego did its best to give the space some depth, and Panayotis Tofi's solo momentarily gave some insight into a more developed movement vocabulary; but ultimately it was a lost cause. The subject was faces, the movement was hiding faces. That was it.

Maddy Morgan

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Wed 30 January

Rubedo Dance Company, Anne-Gaelle Thiriot, Cis O'Boyle/ Tom Lyall/Selina Papoutseli

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- Rubedo Dance** *Gestus*
- Selina Papoutseli, Tom Lyall & Cis O'Boyle** *Actreo*
- Anne-Gaëlle Thiriot** *Vertigos*

Dena Lague's *Gestus* is not jazz dance, but a kind of jazz in dance form. At first, an onstage saxophonist mooches away while a woman in black correspondingly mooches in movement: swishy turns, a staccato foot tremor, a little run. A pianist accompanies a woman in red, leading to duos for both instrumentalists and dancers. Three more women skitter by like a broken chord. It's as smooth, lulling and passing as dinner jazz. Then a drumbeat enters and the work snaps into tauter gear, each dancer riffing in the central spot as the others scatter around her. There's no dramatic impetus, but watching such spatial harmonics in

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action is both absorbing and stimulating.

Actreo. **Tom Lyall** dangles a bunch of crimson bobbles and stares at a big box. There is birdsong. Cut. **Selina Papoutseli** teeters inside a ring of twigs, holding a twig. More teetering. There are rattles, creaks, chords. Cut. Lyall sidles by at snail's pace, bearing box and bobbles. Cut. Papoutseli torques slowly to the ground. Cut. Lyall does weird-out things with his shoulderblades. Let's just cut to the quick. One: the most arresting things on stage are the props, and they are sorely neglected. Two: *Actreo* seems to aim at mystical meaning and succeeds in being mystifying.

Anne-Gaëlle Thirirot's *Vertigos* also veers close to solipsism, but with odd sparks of wit and wonder. Thirirot is our tour guide (a stand-in for the real one, she says). She takes a trip round a pile of red clothes. She teases with some not-quite stripteases. She does some scat-singing, some pogoing. At the work's confessional heart she speaks to a fluorescent light, recalling someone's voice, a train platform... A guide? She was wandering inside her head and I was lost. Still, the final scene will stay with me: lumpen laundry sacks swinging aimlessly over an empty stage while a recording of Georgian folksinger Hamlet Gonashvili fills the air with sublime, soul-piercing sorrow.

Sanjoy Roy

Fluidity and flowing femininity reign in **Rubedo Dance's** *Gestus*, in which five women explore their personalities through dance. In floaty dresses, they are convincingly timid or carefree or peevish, as their solos overlap and gradually unite. But the overall effect, even collectively, is somewhat banal. The aimless live piano and saxophone jazz does little to guide the aimless dancing, the dramatic highpoint of which is a minor skirmish that is dropped, arbitrarily, and dissolved into more swirling and waving limbs. The final, trite phase of group choreography communicates little, feeling more like technical practice than a work with something to share.

Scenography dominates in *Actreo*, a Butoh piece performed by **Selina Papoutseli** and **Tom Lyall**. Crisply framed by lighting and props, a series of prolonged images train our gaze to minor nuances. A man dangles a bunch of red pompoms and stares at a box. A woman stretches skyward

whilst clutching an oak twig, trembling for monotonous minutes. The man's back now appears, starkly lit and revealed as a landscape of rippling surprises. These isolated monoliths hypnotise briefly, but their substance is scant. – Provocative simplicity, with allusions to the numinous that are worthy but don't quite succeed.

Wryly framed as a tour, **Anne-Gaëlle Thiriot's** *Vertigos* is a string of segued moods and bouts, of strangeness and exuberance. After a comic start as tour guide, she shivers and shimmies through jazz as she sorts through a pile of clothes, then undresses and runs rings round the stage. We are led and sometimes lost in random shifts of music and spoken word. But Thiriot seems to dance from her skin, her nerves, and then from her bones with slow, elegant spirals and entrancing, statuesque stills. She dances in her underwear, with abandon, and sets us up as voyeurs to her zany explorations, resulting in a work that is abstract and intimate in equal measure.

Jessica Sabatini

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Thu 31 January

Porkpie Dance Theatre, Hack Ballet, Kansaze Dance

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Kansaze Dance *Looking Back*

Porkpie Dance Theatre *Mum...what's my gam?*

Hack Ballet *Zone*

The six dancers of **Kansaze Dance** are already waiting for us, on-stage, poised in anticipation. A crackling voice-over of Martin Luther King's *I Have A Dream* speech provides an arresting aural ambience. The choreography competes well; it's imaginative, urgent and intense. Bodies morph into one another in sculptural lifts and balances. A cluster of jostling bodies and reaching arms erupts, hurling individuals across the stage, with mercurial velocity; or re-groups in a defiant line, facing us. With the brooding lighting and the sound, it's enough evocation of a tense situation. The blurred footage flashed up overhead of random global protests and the resulting friction between police and

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demonstrators is redundant.

Everything about **Porkpie Dance Theatre's** *Mum..what's my gam?* is charming. The tale, second generation British Asians grappling with their identity, the engaging performance by Anaish Nathan Parmar and Somita Basak comprised of south-Asian dance steps and mime, the live flautist and a touchingly comical pre-recorded conversation between a son and his mum. In twenty minutes, all of the above ingredients successfully combine to illuminate the reflections of a young Asian man who is trying to make sense of his cultural context. While dipping into the complexities of his English/Asian upbringing, the journey he portrays makes light of the inevitable confusions. Upbeat and fun, this is social commentary of the Hanif Kureishi type.

Hack Ballet's six virtuosic contemporary-ballet performers, articulate their trained bodies in a variety of linear poses, angular extensions and fractured interplay between parallel positions and turn-out. Impressive, but it's all about display. Everything about this piece is narcissistic: from the semi-transparent costumes, the 180 degree leg-extensions, to the lighting which sensationalises the choreography with its dramatic black-outs and silhouetting of bodies. The *Zone* the dancers create is one that is cool and flawless but devoid of any personality or warmth. Even in the duets, the dancers relate to each other with tense hostility. I'm happy to leave this alien environment.

Josephine Leask

 It was an evening of vignette-based pieces.

I'm not sure whether **Hack Ballet's** *Zone* was intended as a string of vignettes, but that's how it came across. There was no shortage of technical virtuosity on display but it quickly became gratuitous. The element of competition cited in the program was clear; the six performers seemed out to win at any cost. But the connection between discipline and creativity, which *Zone* also purports to explore, is not always about competition, nor is it always about how high you can get your leg. Maybe I just live in a different dance world (one where I'm not afraid of my colleagues' competitive streaks sabotaging the work), but I

couldn't relate.

Porkpie Dance Theatre tackled subjects of family and diaspora with a dash of humour. Moments of over-theatricality meant that some vignettes worked better than others, but these hammier spells were interspersed with moments of subtler, more effective humour. Although sometimes overly simplistic in its telling, this piece had heart and the voiceover of a conversation between the choreographer and his mum was the labyrinthine thread that tied the vignettes together; it gave the audience something to hold onto and something to take away. However, I left wishing we'd seen more movement from Anaish Nathan Parmar and Somita Basak. This is clearly their strength and they should use more.

Kanasaze Dance's *Looking Back* was a piece I wanted to like but that never really came together. Martin Luther King's *I Have a Dream* speech is an overused source, and not enough was done with it to make me see it anew. Choreographer Rachael Nanyonjo's one-time solo appearance didn't make sense within the context of the other groupings, and, overall, the whole was not greater than the sum of its vignettes. Maria Fonseca's solo performance merits a special mention and stood out as the strongest section. *Looking Back* dealt with important, relevant issues, but didn't express them strongly enough.

Elise Nuding

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Fri 1 February

Nefeli Tsiouti, Seven K Dance, Joe Lott Dance

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- Sven K Dance** *Heart Of Matter*
- Joe Lott Dance** *Chemistry*
- Scope Dance Theatre** *Palette*

Every generation has its keynote choreographer in this Resolution! show it was clear who young choreographers are looking to for inspiration: the limb-twisting influence of Wayne McGregor loomed large on a night when scientific inquiry provided the basis for experiments in dance.

Indeed, there were times when **Sven K Dance** looked like a McGregor tribute band. A good one, I'll grant you, and the six-strong company, led by choreographer Travis Clausen Knight brought masses of commitment to *Heart Of Matter*. McGregor's penchant for science is well-chronicled, so

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I'd bet that the inspiration for the piece - the Higgs boson discovery, facilitated by the Large Hadron Collider - would tickle his academic fancy.

To his credit Knight has clearly studied Random moves extensively and *Heart Of Matter*, with the benefit of some clever lighting moodswings, had the sparky feel of particles shifting in space. The interpretation of Fastidious Android's spacey electronic pulsing soundtrack was spot on. Now Knight needs to find his own galaxies to explore.

In the lab next door **Joe Lott Dance** attempted to bring the creation of the Periodic Table to life in a piece called *Chemistry*. There were McGregorisms aplenty here too, though rougher round the edges. It was only in the closing section, order appearing out of elemental chaos, that Lott struck an original note. With simple skipping walks and geometric lines he created a minimal and poetic finale that hinted at better things to come.

There was an air of academic inquiry about **Scope Dance Theatre's** *Palette* too, though here the deconstruction of hip hop was the experiment in hand. Basing his piece on the four elements of hip hop - B-boying, Mcing, DJing and graffiti - Nefeli Tsiouti showed some neat ideas, notably some spray-can choreography, a dancer's limbs aerosolled into life. But there were too many stretches when the concept overwhelmed the entertainment: the cracking dancers were given frustratingly little to do.

Keith Watson

Joe Lott's *Chemistry* finds its inspiration in Mendeleev's Periodic Table of the Elements. What started as a quintet of two male and three female dancers gathered in a tight molecular structure evolved into a number of variations in duets and trios. The ensuing changes sustained the same level of energy creating a ceaseless interplay between these atomic formations. It was a self-assured piece of abstract dance with clean lines, angular formations and elegant partnering. Resting on a solid structure, *Chemistry* successfully shows that an abstract dance could be a source of pleasure in itself. Perhaps we didn't even need to know the Mandeelev story underneath it.

Nefeli Tsiouti's *Palette* is a reflection on the difference between drawing

and dancing through the lens of hip hop culture. It makes its point by literally contrasting two planes on stage: a painter with his easel and a group of four dancers. The technical virtuosity of the two male dancers was impressive but some smaller interventions worked better. At first, for instance, we could only see feet moving as in a cartoonish animated conversation. Also, the group sequences executed at a slower pace gave us a new perspective on sometimes over-familiar street dance routines. However, an unnecessarily complex narrative hampered the overall energy of the piece.

Travis Clausen-Knight's *Heart of Matter* is based on the recent discovery of the Higgs Boson and experiments conducted in the Large Hadron Collider. The movements are variations on the theme of collision, attraction and wriggling out of tight connections. But having one man as God Particle with four women instantly changes the dynamics among otherwise egalitarian elements. There are some pretty intertwinings amongst these lanky sci-fi heroines with softly pointed feet and the young prince. The use of dancers' shadows against a crimson backdrop is effective, but ending the piece with blue lights moving in the dark is perhaps a little too gimmicky.

Mil Vukovic

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penny & jules dance, Botis Seva - Far From The Norm, Wayne Parsons

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penny and jules dance *#Factory*

Wayne Parsons *Meeting*

Botis Seva/Far From the Norm *Place in Between*

Blurred edges of deconstruction framed this programme, bringing an extra frisson of uncertainty. It began when the theatre doors opened onto a pair of blonde girls in black kneepads, already in place and nonchalantly chatting. And it continued beyond the fading applause for the concluding work, as the audience shuffled away with the solo performer still frozen in his final pose.

#Factory broadcasts its intention via the hashtag, promising a deep dive into the world of social media. The choreography was sleek and often engrossing but it was punctuated by too many interruptions and

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competed with the regular distraction of video projections and musical transitions that added little value. The result was several bite-sized chunks of dance crudely stitched together: although, it must be acknowledged that in appearing to whisper a few words of wisdom into a crowded, noisy room, it provides an apt metaphor for twitter!

Notwithstanding the opener's promising potential, we still stepped up several gears with the seasoned duet choreographed by **Wayne Parsons** on himself and Katie Lusby. Here was a work in which every movement seemed imbued with a particular meaning as repetitive motifs and partnered sequences shifted emphases in the way that an anecdote alters imperceptibly across each telling. The maturation of these two excellent dancers was exemplified in a mutual ability to hold their own arresting chemistry whilst always retaining a strong connection with their audience. Theirs was a *Meeting* that deserves to be reconvened.

The final work was a surprise. I was won over by the strong sense of theatre in **Botis Seva's** *Place in Between* long before any motion from his crouching body. Eventually his torso moved a lot, shoulders almost dislocating with impressive muscular control, but his coverage of space was both minimal and agonisingly slow. Bent forwards, with his back to the audience (we saw his face only in the final sequence), Seva seemed at times to be a Gollum-like creature of the underworld; at others, to be consumed by piety and devotion. Sheets of black paper, marked in silver ink, covered the floor, adding yet more mystery to an intriguing and powerful one-man show. Here was a courageous and raw performance in which Seva left everything on the stage. He wasn't just frozen at the end, but spent. It was surely worth it.

Graham Watts

 The 20th show of this year's Resolution! saw, as always, a diverse mixture of performances delivering sinuous floor work, subtle comedy and anti-climaxes.

Welcoming the audience in, **Penny & Jules'** *#Factory* centred on modern society's obsession with social media, with audience members being encouraged to 'tweet' and 'poke' online throughout. Dancers come on and off the stage in disjointed sections with flashes of repetitive

movements, or image projections connecting them. The movement vocabulary consists of noteworthy floor based routines and intricate contact work that is very aesthetically pleasing. However, the fragmented format abates and confuses the intent, which is overshadowed by the choreography itself. The live interaction with the audience is an interesting and innovative concept that is sadly lost within the piece.

Greatly anticipated and setting the bar for the rest of Resolution! is **Wayne Parsons' Meeting**; a cleverly assembled duet which is proof that simplicity really is the most effective way. Two performers create the narrative with subtle gestures and gazes outwards, whilst moments of comedy are added with a simple repositioning of a hand or head. The manipulative contact sections and dialogue between them strives for a mutual agreement in their movements, whilst the unobtrusive sound score is perfectly timed adding to the comedy and aim of the choreography. It is by all means short and sweet, but fifteen minutes is all it needs to make an impact.

Botis Seva's solo performance in *Place in Between* begins dramatically, and sets itself up for something impressive. As the audience enter, a dull spotlight illuminates Seva crouching in the corner of a stage scattered in black paper. He faces the back, and accompanied by powerful hymn music his bare torso exposes the movements and ripples the choreography effectively creates in his back. It is slow and pensive with clever uses of lighting, but, despite Seva being a fantastic dancer; unfortunately the piece feels like it never finishes the journey that it starts.

Laura Warner

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Thu 7 February

DeNada Dance Theatre, Diciembre Dance Group, The Typewriters

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- DeNada Dance Theatre** *Young Man!*
- Diciembre Dance Group** *Yerma's Nights*
- The Typewriters** *Adaptors*

Ironically titled *Young Man!*, **DeNada Dance Theatre's** seductive homoerotic duet is performed by two women - Sabrina Ribes Bonet and Victoria Da Silva. Not only are this androgynous pair utterly convincing in their portrayal of guys caught in a toxic, sadistic love affair, (inspired by Jean Cocteau's *Le Jeune Homme et la Mort*), they are the most talented dancers I've seen on the Resolution! stage. Through a seamless language of symbiotic contact work, crutch-rubbing, chorizo-nibbling and even masturbation involving a flank of ham in this unapologetic display of teasing arousal, the women astound and disturb, not least through their beguiling appropriation of masculine physicality and the phallus.

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Spanish post-revolutionary music adds to the heady flavour of decadence and promiscuity. It's almost too potent for the remit of Resolution!

With an impossibly hard act to follow, **Diciembre Dance Group** gently eases us back into our Resolution! comfort zone. Although, sadly, everything looks a little bland. Nonetheless, earnest dancing, coherent choreography set to a specially commissioned score, tick all the boxes of what contemporary dance is expected to do. Spanish culture again inspires the narrative, this time a reaction to Lorca's tragic poem about a young women battling with womanhood in a hostile macho society. Moments of poignancy in the lyrical actions which show one woman's reactions to the other fictional character begin to disappear in the sea of scattered pages, when text is awkwardly introduced at the end.

The Typewriters bring us more gender mayhem. This time, however, it's a light-hearted parody of what makes us attracted to others and how that defines the way we look and behave. Mannequins and stylish costumes, provide the necessary accoutrements for the seven strong performers to dress up and mess around with role play. Unison gestural material and some quirky facial activity make *Adaptors* refreshing and fun to watch. The feisty dancers swap their genders in knowingly clichéd mannerisms and playfully crash through all the conventional codes.

Josephine Leask

I can't remember if or when I last saw a dance work that told such a tale. *Young Man!* gave us love, lust and passion, all within twenty minutes. The delectable elasticity of the sexually ambiguous dancers enraptured us with their melodrama as they tossed over each other's bodies, shocking us with what appeared to be a demonstration of the karma sutra. Accompanied by heroic Spanish melodies, leaving us in no doubt as to where this story was set, they had us enchanted by their tragic love affair through performance skills that stunned and bodies that moved in a way that had the audience believing that both of these female dancers were in fact men.

A narrative theme continued in *Yerma's Nights*, where pages littered the stage for the dancers to prance over in a jumble of generic movement, unashamedly emphasising the poem that inspired the work.

Frustratingly this prop was used again as one of the two female dancers stuffed the pages into her dress, 'helping' her to personify the poem's character, only to result in a dull climax soothed only by the delightful live music. A sleepy and over indulgent example of contemporary dance.

A sea of fleshiness smothered the stage as the audience walked in to see seven underwear clad dancers chatting away, setting the free and light-hearted tone for **The Typewriters' Adaptors**. Cross dressing and gender stereotyping were displayed to us in the most blatant of fashions as the two sexes swapped clothes and covered themselves in make-up in between the vogue like poses that triggered faster moves set to a series of techno beats. Although at times descending into a cringe worthy representation of a bad nightclub, overall the eclectic mix of mime, voice and dance was well received.

Esther Loxham

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Tue 8 January

Jacob Hobbs, Wolfgang, Cody's Moving Group

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- Jacob Hobbs** *Hallo Spaceboy*
- Wolfgang** *I am Wolf*
- Cody's Moving Group** *The Fear Factor*

Wolves, zombies and a misplaced astronaut: Welcome to Resolution! 2013.

Jacob Hobbs is a dishevelled, pill-popping astronaut who sports a range of outlandish rubber suits, all of which would not be out of place in a low-budget porn movie. When we meet him, he's supposedly running out of air, stranded somewhere in space. He inanely gabbles to us about his confused, cosmic identity, fiddling with his costumes, wasting time. His swan song, however, in which he belts out **David Bowie's** *Rock'n Roll Suicide* is rendered with passion and amusing urgency. On his

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own admission, dance is not one of his main skills but he fares rather better as a comic and rock singer.

Dance is a strength in **Wolfgang's** *I am Wolf*, in which Francesca Roche and Tomos Young embody the spirits of two frenzied wolves on the verge of destruction. Their stealthy entrance from the auditorium is effective as is their hunted animalistic physicality. Less convincing are the depressing video images of global natural disasters and talking heads which convey over- simplistic, prophetic warnings about man's war with nature. However as the lupine-dancers are cornered, we are left to consult our inner wolves, inspired by a fleeting photo- montage of these beautiful but misunderstood beasts.

Cody Choi's *The Fear Factor*, goes in a more paranormal direction, suggesting that we need to face up to our internal and external zombies. There's nothing very subtle in Choi's piece, but there is some great energy and arresting performance from the team of six young women. To an aural background of pumping techno, and lit by spooky lighting, the women who alternate between being their natural selves and crazed, distorted creatures, could do well on a podium in the Ministry of Sound. Tricky, athletic choreography enacted with attitude and commitment does suggest common, 'teenage' anxieties for *The Twilight Zone* generation, but not mine.

Josephine Leask

It started with a wank. At least that is what **Jacob Hobbs** told us he was doing while he yanked his costume vigorously for a few seconds at the beginning of his *Hallo Spaceboy*. Hobbs, an LSCD alumnus, openly shared the agony of all dancers– can I actually dance. Hobbs told us that he tried but 'it looked shit'. Instead he delivered a well-structured, confident and hugely entertaining stand-up act. And it successfully demonstrated why dance education is good for you, even if you cannot dance at the end of it. Also worth praise is costume design by Hollie Miller which framed perfectly Hobbs' main medium – in this case his slightly chubby yet still visibly fit body.

Doris Humphrey said 'a young choreographer should choose something quite simple, which is thoroughly familiar or within the range of his own experience'. Tomos Young and Francesca Roche did not follow this

advice. The images of tsunami, atom bomb, people shouting about love and selfishness were a backdrop for *I am Wolf* while two of them moved fluidly between four chairs. Big themes aside, why chairs? Merce Cunningham tied a chair to his back. That's how serious the chair is as a stage prop. The fact that the dancing was competent didn't help either. Instead the overloaded narrative made the agile movements look more like snapshots from a yoga retreat than an expression of some horrible existential angst.

A gang of six girls burst on stage in **Cody Choi's** *The Fear Factor*. Someone is after them. Or is it one of them? They ran, they walked and prowled. They screamed and they totally immersed themselves in movements, hypnotic to watch. But what we really wanted from this girly Dance Macabre was for the fear factor to be turned up. We wanted to see the real hair-pulling with the fear visceral rather than acted. As Russ Meyer would say: 'Faster, Pussycat! Kill! Kill!'

Mil Vukovic

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Mariana Camiloti, Nikki Watson, Loughlin Dance

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- Marina Camiloti** *27 Dragonflies*
- Loughlin Dance** *Placid Chaos*
- CoDa Dance Company** *12 Months On*

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Comedian Mel Giedroyc recently nominated people who talk about their dreams as a candidate for dispatching into eternal oblivion on TV show Room 101. She had a point: what can seem fascinating from a personal point of view is rarely so riveting to an outsider and for a fair chunk of **Marina Camiloti's** dream-inspired solo *27 Dragonflies* the suspicion of self-indulgence hung in the air.

It wasn't until she invited the audience to join her dream, using the simple device of getting us to blow into the blue balloon we'd been given and send it to her on stage, that Camiloti made a personal

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connection. We stepped from watching a woman mess about with balloons on stage to investing some of our own emotions into her quest for a sense of lightness. If only she'd done it earlier.

The programme note to *Placid Chaos* by **Loughlin Dance** spoke of a moment 'trapped in oblivion between the past and the future'. And it really was as vague as that. Choreographer Lucy Loughlin desperately needed a more tangible hook to hang her ideas on, because this modern dance by numbers, an exercise in abstract angst that tossed its hair and swung its arms, but signified... well, very little of anything.

By contrast, **Nikki Watson** found emotions to burn in *12 Months On*. Starting with two dancers dropping their partners to the floor - to an audible 'ow!' from the stalls - Watson explored the conflicting feelings provoked by illness with verve and intensity. One section, the dancers convulsing in reaction to relentless medication, was almost too effective: I came over a little queasy.

The end, the stage left empty aside from a motionless figure, didn't pack the emotional punch intended, arriving almost out of nowhere. But, though it was looking death in the eye, *12 Months On* was the most defiantly alive piece of the night.

Keith Watson

Marina Camiloti performed her solo choreography in a wash of green, echoes of dream-like white light partitioning the space and the journey. Dragonflies were abundant during a charming waterfall scene; balloons tumbled from the hands of the audience onto the stage surrounding the soloist. There is mostly pedestrian progress, at times frantic movement, but overall movement content is limited, framed with some text and a wealth of balloons. This is a little sad as when Camiloti finally shifts into movement phrases she is elegant, graceful and polished.

Loughlin Dance's *Placid Chaos*, choreographed by Lucy Loughlin shows five dancers trying hard to tell the story of connections in both the outer and inner self. The dancers appear unsure at first and it is only during the latter sections of the piece as they finally warm up that they begin to relax and determinedly dance. An intoxicating moment brings a back-light of blood red and choreography that moves beyond that of a

technique class and into Loughlin and her dancers showcasing clear structure with strength, individuality and a trust between one another that is pleasing to witness.

CoDa Dance Company's *12 Months On* presents a mature exploration from choreographer, Nikki Watson, as she explores the helplessness, demands, torture and torment that are experienced when supporting illness. The six dancers are confident, agile and surprising. Some of the contact work, body on body, shows a great willingness to develop beyond the classroom and to find new possibilities for movement. They each take body hits, slam into the floor and travel hungrily across the space. A later scene exemplifies brave lighting choices; the space is sectioned to liken that of a darkened room with only street light streaming in through window blinds. A trio moved in tiny gestures whilst the audience's eyes adjust to the darkness, after which they witness the weight of illness and anxiety alongside the shadows forcing unnamed terrors up and out of the dancers' bodies.

Gail Schock

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Tue 12 February

Company Ben Abbes, Tamar Daly, Kaonashi

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Company Ben Abbes *White Room*

Tamar Daly & Nicolette Corcoran *Decode This*

KAONASHI *Fade*

Resolution! may be for newcomers, but Cat Ben Abbes' *White Room* is a novice work. The action, for three women and a man, has a generic contemporary-class look: tilts, flicks, skims, twists. You can all but hear the dancers counting. Phrases are dutifully built into choreography-class formations; there is use of props (clothing, a cardboard box) and expressive movement (face-strokes, intimate lifts). *White Room* shows some potential in its consideration of composition, its suggestions of embodied ideas; but currently it is simply undeveloped.

Decode This is consummate, professional-class level. Vocalist Nicolette Corcoran sends Morse code signals to dancer Tamar Daly, who flinches

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and jolts in time with the dit-dit-dahs. There are bits of a story about a possibly stalkerish phone message; and one about a secret rendezvous coded in the classifieds; and one about a love that must be sealed with an X, via SMS. A sound loop builds up wistful songs and clamorous chatter, Daly spells the alphabet in body rhythm, and there's a race between the pudgy thumbs of texting and the twitchy finger of Morse. All this – plus the implicit idea of our voices and bodies as conduits in a multimedia network – sounds unmanageably complex, yet Daly and Corcoran deftly carry it off with a disarmingly light touch.

KAONASHI company's *Fade* doesn't quite manage its various vibes. There's masquerade: the four performers look kitted out for a costume party – goth woman, shaolin monk, stockinged dolly-bird, southern gent. There's trance: the stage is flush with dry ice and trippy synth, the dancers more absorbed in themselves than each other. And trash: *Fade* has an exploitation-pic feel, the women hookerish and catfighty, the men aloof, sometimes violent. The dance vibe is pretty compulsive: they're mighty fine movers, and the mix of martial arts, dancey-dance and jiggle-bop is always watchable. But that's a lot of vibe for such uncertain purpose. Did I mention the peek-a-boo penguin that winds up getting tucked into with chopsticks? Decode that.

Sanjoy Roy

I hate to appropriate this somewhat taboo phrase, but *White Room* by **Company Ben Abbes** reeked of 'A-level Dance'. Choosing blackouts instead of choreography, unison and accumulation in its most basic forms and generic contemporary/ballet-inspired movement, Abbes created a work which appeared under-researched and juvenile. It was also danced so cautiously that lyrical movement to lyrical music somehow managed to feature no lyricism. A shift came 5 minutes in - perhaps "we've done some dancing, so now let's address the idea of the piece". A lone performer stands rummaging through a box of treasured possessions, peering at them not-so-forlornly while a

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spotlighted solo happens upstage... Tragic. And then out of nowhere it ended.

The second work of the night, *Decode This*, was a hilariously relevant plug into the ambiguous world of texting. Let's face it, dance about communication tech/social media/anything modern is usually awful, but **Tamar Daly** and **Nicolette Corcoran** skilfully dodged the cliches with a sharp sense of irony. Daly samples nods and winks in broken fragments of funky movement, alongside her partner's beautifully layered dah-de-dah's. Corcoran's voice and loop-pedal combo was amusingly reminiscent of old polyphonic ringtones and her effortlessly nonchalant monologues interrupted the dance, questioning the meaning of smileys and preferred number of X's at the end of texts. The humour clearly struck a chord with a tickled audience.

Fade by **KAONASHI** was a rather odd collision between four disconnected characters. Slick movement laced with exacting footwork captured interest from the start, but this work quickly established itself as a series of solos, where each time the other three watched from the sidelines. Any sparse exploration of relationships was eroded by the unmoving banality of their characters, largely reduced to over-repeated gestural ticks. *Fade* came to life with the surprise introduction of a remote controlled penguin, but this satisfying injection of absurdity was too little, too late.

James Morgan

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Wed 13 February

Luiza Lazzaro, CoCo Dance, 70/30 Split

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- 70/30 SPLIT** *Content part 1*
- LUISA LAZZARO** *Oh Vacuum*
- CoCoDANSE** *Setback*

"It's not live art without any boobs", declared **70/30 Split** in their piece *Content part 1*: and so we got boobs, plus a touch of satirical movement and a lot of self-deprecation. There were moments of quality, a punchy duet to "Cissy Strut" and an uber un-glorified burlesque strip, but the text was often too drawn out and repetitive. Unwin and Cottrell are definitely whizzes in entertainment but overall the piece lacked the snappiness it needed to really make it fly.

Luisa Lazzaro's *Oh Vacuum* starts with Lazzaro changing a Hoover bag and going about domestic life, back and forth across stage. The

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anticipation of how this cycle will break is totally engaging, and it finally does so in a horror show moment when the vacuum takes on a life of its own. Lazzaro personifies the Hoover as she re-enters wearing a dress made of its bags and pipes. The movement is laboured and as she dances she scatters white mess. Whether the turn from the mundane to the eerie and abstract was about the subordination of women, or being weighed down by the monotony of domestic life, it is never quite apparent. Lazzaro clearly goes somewhere, I'm just not sure she takes the audience with her.

Setback by **CoCoDanse** turns the stage into a dark, space-like world filled with particles in loose white shirts. The opening, with its breathing frog-leg movement had great intensity, and soon the dancers were falling and colliding all around their universe. Generally the vocabulary was too familiar to be interesting but there were smatterings of success in the more intricate movements, tossing hands and not quite touching duets. Perhaps Jola was too focussed on the randomness of the universe, as ultimately the piece lacked definition and melody, which was only exacerbated by the sound-scape of moody electronic wilderness.

Maddy Morgan

It's all very low key and unshowy at tonight's Resolution!, with a side order of eeriness for good measure. *Content part 1*: is a promising piece of dance theatre from duo **70/30 Split**. The pair consistently undermine themselves so the audience don't have to. 'I'm not sure they want to hear this self-indulgent shitty text', says one. With a loose burlesque theme, they unceremoniously get their tits out early – 'The best we can offer you is this' – just so there's no expectation of a big climax. Of course, they're underselling themselves. There's a good idea here and two confident performances. It's all very meta; a work about creating a work. But ultimately it's a pretty successful piece about disappointment, unmet expectations, and how difficult it is to make dance theatre.

Luisa Lazzaro's *Oh Vacuum* is one of those works where you'd really like to know what's going on in the choreographer's head. It starts, bravely, with an unrushed Lazzaro going through the mundane motions of life – vacuuming, fiddling with her phone, carrying shopping bags, sipping from a water bottle. Its brazen ordinariness is deeply intriguing, transfixing

almost. And when that ordinariness suddenly shudders into something else, with flickering lights and smoke and a sinister masked figure hovering by the wings, it's a really effective disorientation. But where it goes from there – Lazzaro shuffling about the stage in a Hoover-bag dress – is surprisingly less engrossing. This bit actually feels more like drudgery than watching her do the housework.

CoCoDanse's *Setback* also has an alienating quality about it, coming mostly from the random reverberations of the electronic soundscape, which really sets the tone since the dancers are so purposefully purposeless they're almost a blank canvas. That's not a criticism; it's a clever choreographer (Corinne Jola) who can create such a state of movement without motive, pushed by outside rather than inner forces. The resulting choreography is a languid slow-drift that falls into some pleasing permutations. Apparently it's all inspired by physics, which I never completely understood either.

Lyndsey Winship

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Fri 15 February

Wrecking Ball Dance Company, Off the Map, The Twin Factory

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- The Twin Factory** *Geraldine And Me*
- Wrecking Ball Dance Company** *Even The Devil Has Demons*
- Off The Map** *Iridescent*

'So what do we think? Emotional music, elaborate costuming... who IS Geraldine?' It was considerate of one half of **The Twin Factory** to leave the stage near the end of *Geraldine And Me*, enter the audience and offer a humorous summary of the 20 minutes which had gone before. It added a much-needed personal element to a proptastic performance piece which buried its emotions too deeply beneath its copious skirts.

The Twin Factory duo Rachel Champion and Linda Remahl revealed a sophisticated grasp of stagecraft, hauling on everything from bells and bellows to music stands to paint a portrait of their agitated heroine Geraldine. But amid all the costume changes and clever scene

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shifts, Geraldine herself got lost.

Inhabiting a curious stylistic twilight zone pitched somewhere between contemporary, hip hop and MTV videos, the hoodied quintet who made up **Wrecking Ball Dance Company** made a brave fist of the eclectic challenge Caitlin Barnett threw at them. To her credit she mined something individual from her melting pot of influences, at times hitting a club-based groove as her dance teased at the notion of inner demons. But though Barnett has musicality to spare, she needs to add some grit to the shape-throwing.

Setting nine dancers in motion on stage is a challenge for an inexperienced choreographer and there were moments in *Iridescent* when **Steve Johnstone** had bitten off more than he could chew. At times, he was playing statues. But in the quieter, gestural moments, all nine dancers' backs turned to stage, there was an understated visual poetry at play. When the dance didn't try too hard to be dance, it worked. Watching all nine throw off their shackles and party down to Linkin Park's anthemic chorus *Remember all the sadness and frustration and let it go*, let it go was a fine way to bring Resolution's! curtain down. Dance could do with a touch more letting go.

Keith Watson

The Twin Factory present *Geraldine and Me*, choreographed and performed by Rachel Champion and Linda Remahl. When entering the theatre, the audience is each handed a small envelope with a G stamped on it. Later on, when everybody is asked to look inside their envelope it reveals a note "I am Geraldine." If we were supposed to mimic the final scene of Monty Python's **The Life of Brian**, it didn't quite work out that way. Geraldine reads as a series of images rather than a choreographed dance and I'm not sure whether the audience would have been as patient with it had it been presented by emerging performers.

Choreographer **Caitlin Barnett** brings five dancers together to tell us *Even The Devil Has Demons*. Caitlin's work has varying shades of dance genres and moods, some a success others less so. This piece is raw, pulsing and quite interesting, but I wanted more. Caitlin needs to worry

less about making a piece of work that is 15-20 minutes long and be more confident in her choices. Removing bridges and transitions, reordering the work and developing a piece that's seven minutes long would showcase her ideas more consistently and give the audience a better idea of what she and her dancers are capable of.

Steve Johnstone shares *Iridescent*, which asks the audience if we're doing everything we can to achieve our goals. It feels as if this is only a question within the programme notes and not one that necessarily translates to the choreography. Nine female dancers take the stage and move through a collection of developed phrases, the piece is generally a success, but has a somewhat youth dance feel about it. We have three trios identified by costuming, crossing over the back line, then releasing as everyone is free to jump around the stage, ending again where they began. The piece has charm, but I'm left wondering how the weight of the work would change if it were performed by an all male ensemble.

Gail Schock

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