

Provocation before pleasure

DANCE

New Creations by Rafael Bonachela and Adam Linder
Sydney Dance Company,
Sydney Theatre, March 23.

DEBORAH JONES

RAFAEL Bonachela has shown considerable acuity in inviting Adam Linder to choreograph for Sydney Dance Company in this new double bill. It means the program contains one work to provoke and one to please.

With Bonachela's third work for SDC now before us, we can see clearly what the artistic director's tastes are, and they aren't going to frighten the horses.

Bonachela gracefully collaborates with fashion designers and moving-image makers who bring considerable glamour and a sense of the now — and wow — to the stage.

The look is clean-cut in a way that evokes sophistication rather than austerity, the video component is exciting and works are structured with a sure understanding of just how long is long enough for any section.

Such skills shouldn't be disregarded but they don't necessarily make for the deepest emotional or intellectual engagement.

Last year's *We Unfold* was more compelling in that respect than *6 Breaths*, although the latter is extremely beautiful in execution, starting with Tim Richardson's video art.

It assembles and disassembles figures from flying shards in a magical way: a thoroughly modern take on the first man being breathed into life.

Different sorts of breathing inspired the work but the idea has limitations. It's much more show than tell.

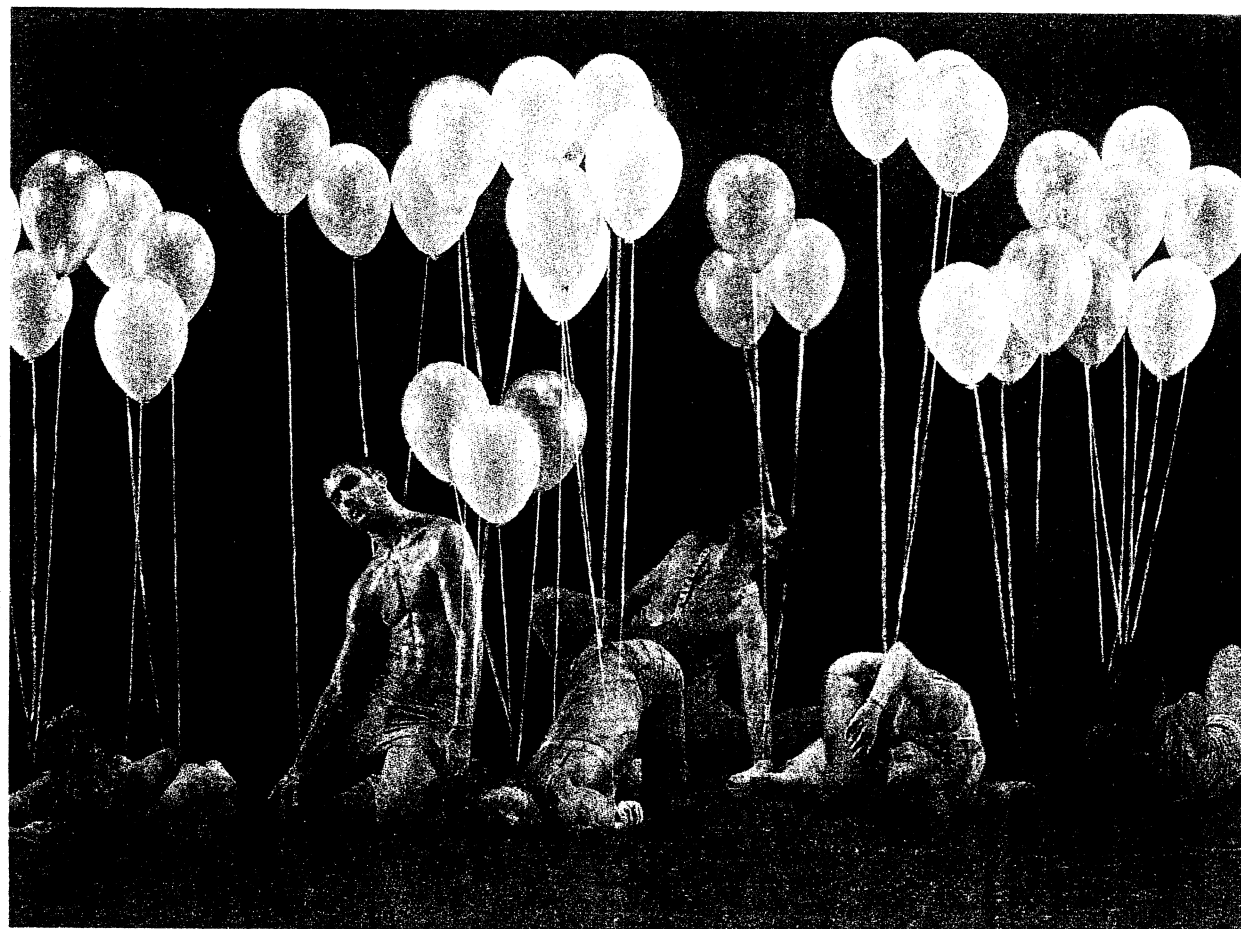
A slow duet for Richard Cilli and Alexander Whitley stands out for what it implies about a relationship, and the ensemble ending for all 12 dancers has exquisite gestures and formations.

Bonachela uses music as a guide and support rather than an antagonist and enjoys working with Italian Ezio Bosso, who created a new score for *6 Breaths*, for piano and six cellos.

The piano part often has a Satie-esque plaintiveness while the cellos are lush and sensuous. The whole is never less than lovely.

Linder, the young expatriate Australian dancer and choreographer who lives in Berlin, opens the evening with *Are We That We Are*.

He kick-starts things by stomping to the stage from the theatre, making clear his role as the observer and the one asking the



Adam Linder's intriguing and challenging *Are We That We Are* ends on a sentimental note, balloons and all

question, or the sort-of question. The lack of an interrogation mark implies a further level of disturbance and ambiguity in a piece that takes agitation of body and psyche to a high level.

Six dancers, including the mesmerising Juliette Barton, shiver, shudder and stagger; they cling together and are flung apart.

The music, when it's there, is scratchy and the movement language is uncompromisingly ugly

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for much of the time, making the dancers look like aliens, automatons or lesser life forms under Nick Schlieper's roaming lights.

Out of this emerges a beautiful duet for Linder and Charmene Yap, intimately entwined in a dance that is equal parts tenderness and desperation. It's hard to tell where one body starts and the other ends.

Some playfulness of a surreal

kind follows and a brief, tortured solo for Linder.

The ending, featuring balloons, is rather sentimental after such toughness, but for the most part *Are We That We Are*, with its jagged, dystopian view of life, challenges, intrigues and, surprisingly, burrows under the skin.

Tickets: \$40-\$70. Bookings: (02) 9250 1999. Ends April 10.