



Ensemble whooping it up in the land of yes

SALLIE DON

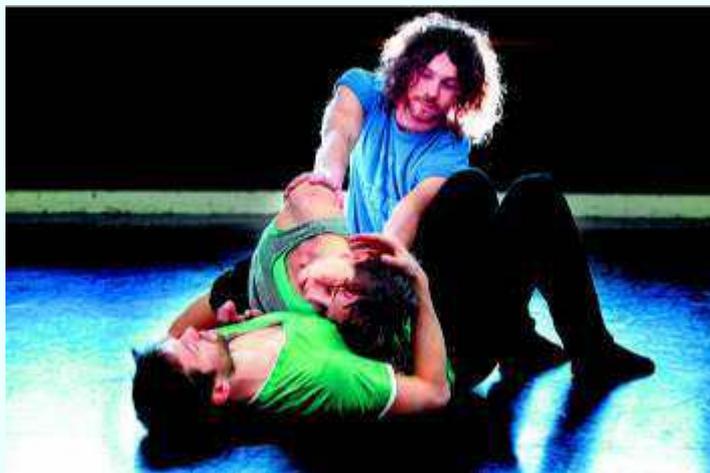
HE has been making dances on the international scene for many years, but Rafael Bonachela says he is still trying to become a better choreographer.

Having just accepted a second three-year contract as artistic director of Sydney Dance Company, he is reworking for Australian audiences a "pure dance piece" he toured through Europe two years ago with his London-based Bonachela Dance Company.

Although the essence of the work remains, Bonachela says *The Land of Yes and the Land of No* has evolved and will be performed in Australia by a larger ensemble than in Europe.

"When you have a unison dance on stage of 10 dancers, it's a much bigger impact," he says. "It's a lot more powerful. Obviously I'm a different person two years on, so the work is different. Sometimes I look at the work and go: 'Oh god, why didn't I do that before?'"

The 70-minute piece, originally performed by six dancers, is a col-



ALAN PRYKE

Bernhard Knauer (in green), Emily Amisano and Lachlan Bell

laboration between Bonachela and Ezio Bosso, an Italian composer with whom he has frequently worked.

Opening tomorrow night as part of the Brisbane Festival, the work will head south for a season at the Sydney Theatre next month.

The piece begins at a slow pace against a stripped-back stage, illuminated by a row of neon lights.

Solos and duets build to a frantic group finale.

Performers are dressed in white sculpted costumes, a deliberate move away from the "usual Lycra-clad dancer we see so much" in contemporary dance, designer Theo Clinkard says.

Inspired by traffic signs and the barrage of instructions in everyday life, *The Land of Yes and the Land of No* explores the emotions

and memories offered by dancers during the creative development.

"Every day we leave the door we're told, 'Turn left, turn right, mind the gap', and we're not even aware of it, we just do it," Bonachela says.

The title of the piece, which Bonachela says sounds like the name of a fairytale, comes from Bosso's childhood.

"His mother used to have areas in the house where you could play and be crazy, that was called the land of yes," Bonachela says. The land of no was where Bosso was not allowed to do anything.

The work also explores what happens when people decide to stop following rules, which is, Bonachela says, "when life can also get exciting. But there is no clear part of the dance where you go: 'Oh, that's a yes part and that's a no part.' Like in real life, people will decide what is yes or no for themselves."

The Land of Yes and the Land of No is at the Queensland Performing Arts Centre, Brisbane, Wednesday to Saturday; then Sydney Theatre, October 18-29.