



**DANCE**

# The signs said: stop-go, yes-no, maybe

**THE LAND OF YES AND THE LAND OF NO**

Sydney Theatre, October 19  
 Until October 29  
 Reviewed by Jill Sykes

THERE is so much to praise in Rafael Bonachela's latest work for the Sydney Dance Company that it's disappointing it doesn't make the impact its individual performing components deserve. The dancers are terrific movers, they perform impeccably, the presentation is clear and clean. So what's the problem?

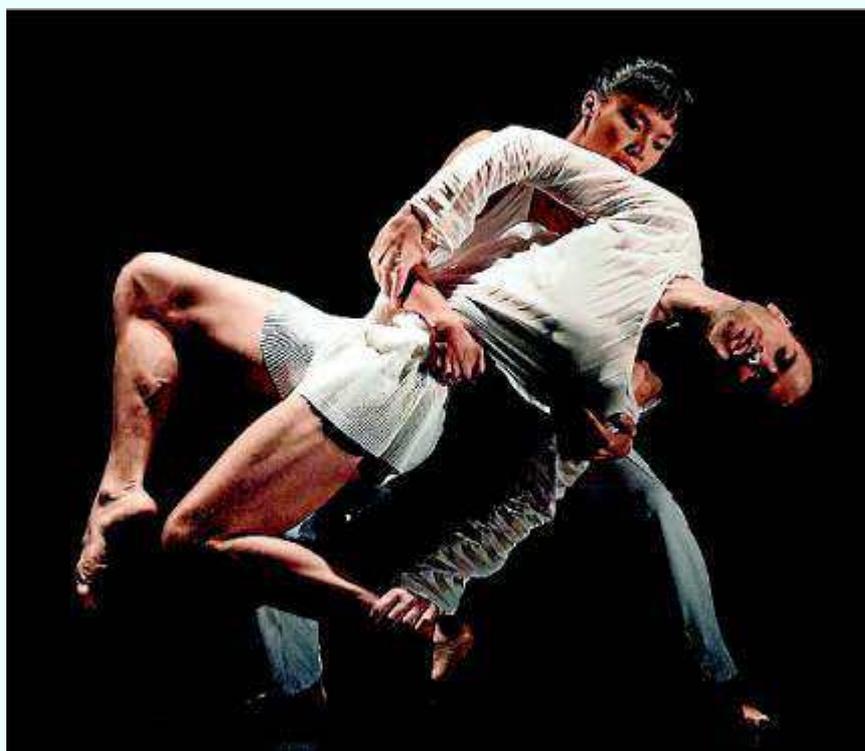
Maybe it's too many steps – arms and legs dizzyingly flashing in all directions – without enough space for the movement to breathe. There is a lack of phrasing that would allow time for a series of actions to reach their conclusion and make satisfying contact with the audience.

The dancers are wonderful: flexible, energetic, committed, precise. Yet it is rare to spot the kind of individuality that projects something special from a performer. On opening night, only Charmene Yap and Chen Wen put something extra into their movement that set them apart.

There are no complaints about the quality of any performances – and praise in particular to Richard Cilli, Natalie Allen, Emily Amisano, Lachlan Bell and Kynan Hughes for featured opportunities they took up with dynamic finesse. But their performing style seems to be set in a template.

This deadens even the most intricate solos and duets that are the main ingredient of this barefoot production, originally created in 2009 for Bonachela's London company and developed for 10 SDC performers.

It is always interesting to read about



**Frantic activity ... Charmene Yap and Richard Cilli.** Photo: Wendell Teodoro

a choreographer's starting point for a piece. Bonachela writes in a program note that he has long been interested by the way public signs – traffic signs, for instance – shape so much of what we do. Was the sameness of performances intentional?

Bonachela also writes about emotions and what happens if we don't follow those signs – yet it is hard to spot key changes in mood and approach in *The Land of Yes and the Land of No*, unless you count the crescendos in Ezio Bosso's commissioned music and

the even more feverish activity that accompanies them.

Alan Macdonald's simple set of a fluorescent light grid that switches on and off in sections is effective and a good tool for focusing on the dance. It is vividly enhanced by Guy Hoare's lighting design.

Theo Clinkard's white costumes pleated in various ways and angles come in almost as many shapes and sizes that are lively to look at but sometimes unflattering to the performers.