

Dance a timely commentary on our changed world

A respectable audience at the Market Hall was treated to a blind date with noted choreographer Bill James.



**DANCE
REVIEW
JONOTHAN
FIDDLER**

Bill Kimball, producer of the Peterborough New Dance series brought James to town with his troupe in order to create a piece with local performers and multi-media artist Shelagh Young.

Under tight timelines, the group managed to parcel together a good quality piece containing timely commentary on the world, recently much changed, that we share. To open the evening doings, the James company performed an excerpt from a lengthier work from their repertoire entitled Wind.

Utilizing all possible combinations of dancers from his five person company, James's long form piece Wind is a meditation on the human condition of remaining earthbound while yearning for the freedom experienced by the winged set. Flight has been a dream of man since time immemorial, and considerable energy and imagination has been devoted to the enterprise.

James's powerhouse piece is a testament to that yearning and an exquisite one at that. Accompanied by a score by Luc Marcel performed on woodwind instruments, the music is freeform and eerily elegant; sounding like something Ellington may have composed after a night in a freshly painted room. The demanding and athletic performance has the dancers straining against the yoke of gravity with lifts, leaps and other acrobatics that are impressive for their power.

But the piece is not without its quieter moments as well. James

displays a deft hand, able to create lithe and sinuous solos and duets, as well as captivatingly energetic and exciting group segments.

The collaborative nature of the second piece, and the speed with which it was created, add to the interest of Panopticon, the evening's second piece with a whopping cast of eleven performers. As the audience enters the theatre, they find three televisions spaced across the front of the stage all showing the same image of water pouring and ebbing.

Projected onto the large screen at the back of the stage are real time images of the audience from two different angles. Seated along the back of the stage are the performers, with the exception of one, who stands on her head before a pile of ashes.

The seated performers sit motionless, in various attitudes, betraying no signs of emotion. As the headstander rolls into the ashes and emerges, another takes her place in the pile. Next, the dancers approach

the stage front to meet the gazes of audience members before peeling off to dart about the stage, coming to stand still, arms thrust in the air or raised to protect themselves from some unseen threat.

Order is imposed only to deteriorate into chaos and finally bedlam.

Performed to a pulsing, percussive score augmented by digital scratching, leads to the feeling of something tribal and troubled. Interesting are the many ideas engendered in this piece. Chiefly, the ironic ability of mass media to show us ourselves and prevent us from connecting with each other as well as the natural world.

Dance fans will have another opportunity to catch this unique performance when the program runs again tonight. Performances of this quality and clarity are deserving of our attention.

Jonathan Fiddler is a freelance theatre and dance critic for The Examiner.