

Tracy Murrey

Access TO HE: MPA

Critical and Contextual Studies: Twisted Beauty Review

“Twisted Beauty”, a contemporary dance production, was choreographed and performed by the second year BTEC dance students at Bournemouth and Poole College’s Jellicoe Theatre. Directed and based on an original idea by Gareth Morrell, the seventy minute show comprised of dance routines influenced by artwork primarily by Dutch abstract painter Piet Mondrian and Pablo Picasso.

A central theme was the fusion of traditional and modern music and imagery; graceful ballet routines to driving, sometimes abstract, modern tracks, and contemporary dance to music with a traditional, classical twist. The inspired costumes and make-up reflected this, each performer cleverly split in half, one side natural and one side twisted. This was very effectively achieved by painting half the face with the vertical and horizontal black lines and primary colours reminiscent of Mondrian’s artwork. It was also pleasant to have some recognisable, current music included, such as tracks by The Streets and Adele.

There were 19 dancers, mostly female, which was a shame as the two male dancers provided the strength to perform some very athletic moves and beautiful lifts. As someone with no technical knowledge of dance, the choreography seemed very advanced and physically demanding to me, perhaps a little too demanding for a few of the performers. However, it was a considerable achievement considering that each routine was conceived and choreographed in only 8 days. A variety of moods and emotions were conveyed to the audience throughout the show. A cold and industrial sense as the expressionless performers moved in harmony to create the impression of machines, reinforced by projections of cogs and industrial fans on the theatre walls. In contrast there were tender, beautiful and sometimes touching routines in the second half of the performance. Coloured lighting was used to great effect clearly defining each section of the performance.

The atmosphere in the theatre was friendly and up-beat as the audience consisted largely of fellow students and friends of the performers. Despite some initial seating problems the audience soon settled and entered into the spirit of the show, each routine being enthusiastically cheered and applauded. The set was visually very stimulating with many pieces of artwork decorating the stage, notably two large and impressive copies of Picasso’s “Girl before a Mirror” and “The Three Dancers”. Neon paint and smoke were very striking under the lights adding to the contemporary ambience.

The highlight of the show was undoubtedly Liam’s performance, especially in the two duets he performed with Jenny and Emma, both of whom were graceful and elegant. The audiences gasped as Liam executed breathtaking leaps of super-human height and lifted his partners making it appear that they were feathers on a breeze. It was even more impressive considering that he had been involved in an accident where he seriously injured his hand and shoulder.

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Overall, “Twisted Beauty” was a wonderful success and thoroughly enjoyable. There were some timing issues in places but nothing that could not be ironed out with more rehearsal time. Considering that this was a student performance I was amazed with the level of professionalism and creativity in all aspects of the production. Many of the people in my row, including myself, had never experienced dance like this and it was a fantastic opportunity to do so. I was surprised by the enthusiasm and positive reactions afterwards and felt it reinforced the words of Piet Mondrian: “Art is not made for anybody and is, at the same time, for everybody.”