

Time Out Melbourne

# Complexity of Belonging

\*\*\*\* 09-25 Oct, [Melbourne Festival](#), [Performance Art](#), [Southbank](#), [Theatre](#), [Theatre](#)  
[Previews](#)  
Critics Choice



*The ceasefire between words and movement yields rich results in this rare collaboration*

Dance exists in a space beyond words, and there is a definite sense that movement can be more supple, more ambiguous and fluid than text. Italo Calvino said "There is no language without deceit"; should we therefore trust the dancer's body over the actor's speech?

In a collaboration between MTC and Chunky Move, *Complexity of Belonging* actively discourages the taking of sides, deliberately merging the discrete powers of text and movement into a hybrid form, one that may not be totally original but certainly seems fresh. There is a dynamism to this show that should be the envy of most mainstage fare, and immediately legitimates its place in the [Melbourne Festival](#).

It opens wide, but narrows quickly. Eloise Mignon provides a frame of sorts, playing a young woman intent on gathering information to support her seemingly fixed notion of belonging. In an attempt to record and document people's responses to this idea, she discovers levels of nuance she wasn't expecting. She isn't the only one.

Belonging to a nation, to a race, a sexuality, a tribe – the differences that really seem to separate individuals in our society – is unpacked and contextualised, but ultimately isn't the main concern.

The piece leans instinctively towards the personal, as if the larger resonances were simply mnemonics for the more intimate ones.

The performers are mostly brilliant. Dancers and actors are often indistinguishable, given the physical and emotional demands the piece places on them. Josh Price and Joel Bray bring a lovely tenderness to their roles as a gay couple thinking of making a baby. The suggestion here is that the need to belong to a family is so intrinsic it overrides the need to identify as gay. It's a refutation of the idea that the personal is political.

Others stand out. Stephen Phillips is electric as an increasingly alienated businessman, his monologue on crushing despair a masterclass in control. By far, though, the highlight of the night comes from Lauren Langlois, who delivers a list of things she's looking for in a man that is truly one of the funniest things audiences will see on a stage all year. It's a showstopper.

It's actually a very funny show, and it uses the humour to make some powerful points. Just as well, because writer Falk Richter has a tendency to proselytise, and the ending in particular is marred by a slide into outright didacticism. The true ending lies in the iconographic game of musical chairs that precedes the finale. There are also some fairly banal comments on Australian society that could and probably should be dropped in future iterations.

Not that these flaws get in the way of some serious and often profound meditations on the isolating and dislocating nature of modern life. It is obvious that this work has had a long genesis, and the dramaturgy is brilliantly present. A show that is as much about communication and identity as it is about belonging, with pulsating and often heartrending choreography by Anouk Van Dijk, this is a powerful fusion of aesthetics and performance principles. Go.

By **Tim Byrne** |

## **Complexity of Belonging details**

### **Southbank Theatre**

#### **Address**

*The Summer*

140 Southbank Blvd, *Southbank* 3006

**Telephone** 03 8688 0800

#### **Transport**

Nearby Stations: Flinders Street

**Buy tickets** **Price** \$40.00 to \$79.00

**Date** 09-25 Oct

**Open** Mon-Tue 7pm; Wed-Fri 8pm; Sat 8.30pm; Sat Oct 25 4pm; no performance Mon Oct 20

**Complexity of Belonging website**

<http://www.au.timeout.com/melbourne/theatre/events/12177/complexity-of-belonging>