

An Act of Now

By Sara Bannister



Beautiful and risky, disturbing and passionate are just some of the ways in which to describe Chunky Move's new contemporary dance piece, *An Act of Now*. As the very first production by the company's new artistic director Anouk Van Dijk, *An Act of Now* is a thrilling moment for anyone who cares about dance and its possibilities.

The show begins with audience members placing headphones over their ears and walking along a sloping field at the outer edge of the Sidney Myer Music Bowl. Voices whisper words of warning, or reassurance, in our ear. Dancers guide the audience down the sloping field to the stage in what is an atmospheric start. Music pounds into our ears and up through the floor of the stage. There are times you will wish you could get up and dance yourself, other times when you are glad it is not you trapped within that glass set. Eight dancers in hoodies, and loose, urban clothing appear inside the smoky glass box. They could be individuals waiting for something to arrive, or members of a gang, and the effect is an uneasy one. They could be any of us.

Once the dancing begins, it is fierce, powerful even dangerous. Every part of the glass set is used. Dancers hang from the rafters, cling to the 'glass' panels, and come up out of the floor, legs first. Women dance with muscular men in exchanges that are dangerous-looking, but these women are also quite strong. Highlights are plentiful. Dancers lie together on the floor, and twirl upwards in a wave formation. Another time they are slapping their arms and legs on the stage, or writhing as though they are all having nightmares. I kept looking at their arms and legs to check for bruises, so frenetic and physically challenging were their moves. The intensity of their dancing even had me

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worried about their welfare at certain points. How did they get through without any injuries? The answer is: they didn't. One dancer had to leave early on due to an injury.

Certain audience members just sat and watched, mouths gaping. It is such an intense, dark piece of work. It will make you feel a whole range of emotions. The final moments are about hope and relief for audience and dancers alike. Absolutely not to be missed.

