

The Age

## An Act of Now

22<sup>nd</sup> October 2012

By Jordan Beth Vincent

WE LOOK down onto a small smoke-filled house of glass and metal from the crest of a hill. Against the inky sky beyond, the structure seems impossibly small - whispered words through our headphones echo the intimacy within the glass house. We proceed down the hill, through the seating banks and onto the stage as the dancers appear and then recede as silhouettes in the fog.

*An Act of Now* is the first work for the company by new artistic director Anouk van Dijk, and it pushes the theatrical potential of the space and the physical limitations of the dancers. Van Dijk's movement system, Countertechnique, deliberately forces bodies off balance to spectacular, whirling, and often brutal effect.



Chunky Move's *An Act of Now* is the first work for the company by new artistic director Anouk van Dijk. *Photo: Jeff Busby*

There is a sense of risk in this work, born from the nature of the dives and spins, and the confrontational way the dancers shove, slap and lift one another within the enclosure of the glass box. It seems as though a collision is imminent as the dancers scale the walls, hang from the rafters, crash into the ground, and drop into holes in the floor.

Advertisement

## The Age

Nina Wollny and James Pham heighten the sense of suspension before each fall, adding further texture to a movement vocabulary that is already layered and imbued with emotional veracity.

Extremes of human emotion - hysterical laughter, screaming accusations, outpourings of fury, grief, and desire - are magnified by the quarantining nature of the space. We are like Big Brother, watching the violence passively outside, looking in on willing captives in a community with its own set of rules and power struggles.

There is always an element of danger in dance, and the opening night performance was halted after the onstage injury of dancer Stephanie Lake.

The second night's performance had seven dancers instead of eight, but all demonstrated an admirable professionalism in difficult circumstances.

The reality is that dance is an athletic pursuit and injuries are relatively common. And it is also true that watching dancers pushed to their physical limits can be exhilarating - if not frightening - heightening our own kinesthetic response to the movement before us. Creating this experience and response, more than anything else, seems to be the driving force behind van Dijk's work.

*An Act of Now* heralds the arrival of an entirely new Chunky Move - a company that may well be characterised by grand theatrical concepts, highly physical performances, and non-traditional spaces put to dramatic use.

**4 stars**