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Since taking over Sydney Dance Company (SDC) in 2009, Spanish choreographer, Rafael Bonachela, has revolutionised the company. Almost all of the original dancers from the Graeme Murphy era were replaced, the look of
the company has become more slick and virtuosic, and Bonachela has embarked on new collaborations, notably partnering with composers, Ezio Bosso and Nick Wales, and designer, Tony Assness. In only three years Bonachela has become an artistic force in New South Wales, curating the recent Spring Dance season at the Sydney Opera House. The program, *Contemporary Women*, featured new works by female choreographers, Larissa McGowan, Stephanie Lake, Lisa Wilson and SDC dancer Emily Amisano.

2 One Another - now just finished its Melbourne season – is Bonachela’s fifth new work for SDC and one of his strongest to date. Melbourne audiences were familiar with this particular work; not only did the company perform an excerpt at the Australian Ballet’s June Gala, *Let’s Dance*, but the full work was screened nationally on television earlier in the year. The work lends itself beautifully to the screen, with a brilliantly-lit set of pinpoint lights and dynamically exciting movement material.

Poet Samuel Webster’s text provides the backbone for 2 One Another, not only as another layer of the musical score, but as an inspiration for the choreographic process. Together with composer Nick Wales (who mixes his own compositions with Baroque and Renaissance music) Bonachela has created a work that mirrors the structure of the music. The confluence of movement, sound and swirling lights makes for an engrossing result, allowing the audience the opportunity to revel in the sensory experience.

There is something mathematical about the way Bonachela choreographs – but I don’t mean to imply that there is something cold or unemotional in his work. Rather, there is a sense here of choreography as craft, of a choreographer piecing together a jigsaw puzzle of choreographic themes that fold and unfold as the work evolves.

Another strong aspect of 2 One Another is the sense of style. Costumes designed by Tony Assness (Assness also directed the screen content and

Chen Wen in 2 One Another.
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http://dancetabs.com/2012/12/sydney-dance-company-2-one-another-melbourne/
production design) are slick and sexy; grey leotards, tights and tops with high
necks and neon yellow zippers down the back. The costumes for the second
half of the work consist of draped crimson leotards; men and women dressed
the same in costumes that seem far too chic to be called simply ‘androgynous,’
no matter how apt the term.

Assness’ style stamp is all over this work. A backdrop of stars glitters, swirls,
and falls in the background, almost as though the dancers are suspended in
some far-off galaxy. Together with Benjamin Cisterne’s lighting – a golden glow
from above that highlights the musculature of the dancers – this show is
undeniably glamorous.

The moments of ensemble have such an impact that an ending that sees only
two dancers gradually winding down to stillness feels unsatisfying. It is not as
though Bonachela introduces new material in the ending duet between dancers
Andrew Crawford and Juliette Barton, but rather that in comparison to the
cacophonous moments of movement and music, the ending feels somehow
small. However, there is so much to enjoy about 2 One Another that this is a
small quibble.

Natalie Allen & Andrew Crawford in 2 One Another.
© Ken Butti. (Click image for larger version)

Dancers Natalie Allen, Charmene Yap, Richard Cilli and Andrew Crawford
stand out in a very strong company of dancers. This work is extremely well
rehearsed considering it has been touring for a number of months – a
testament, perhaps, to the discipline of former SDC dancer-turned-rehearsal-
director, Amy Hollingsworth. Unfortunately, a few dancers are leaving the
company after this season – both Emily Amisano and Richard Cilli have
decided to move on. It is a shame for SDC, as these two dancers demonstrate
outstanding stage presence and strength.

2 One Another is a totally unapologetic work – powerful and unselﬁsh in the
way it turns up the volume in design, physicality and sound. It is this tone
that sets this work apart from other choreographic explorations here, and
reminds us all about how large distances between capital cities in Australia can
lead to rare moments of inﬂuence and shared inspiration.
Tags: 2 One Another, Amy Hollingsworth, Andrew Crawford, Australian Ballet, Benjamin Cisterne, Charmene Yap, Contemporary Women, Emily Amisano, Ezio Bosso, Graeme Murphy, Juliette Barton, Larissa McGowan, Lisa Wilson, Melbourne, Natalie Allen, Nick Wales, Rafael Bonachela, Richard Cilli, Stephanie Lake, Sydney, Sydney Dance Company, Sydney Opera House, The Playhouse, Tony Assness

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