

Movement of the Human

Auckland Fringe, Concert Chamber, Auckland Town Hall, February 21-24, 2019

theatre review

NO SPACE UNEXPLORED IN IMMERSIVE ENGAGEMENT



Andi Crown

Auckland Fringe Festival 2019

MOVEMENT OF THE HUMAN

Designer, Set and AV: Rowan Pierce

Director: Malia Johnston

Composition and sound design: Eden Mulholland

at Concert Chamber, Town Hall, Auckland Live, Auckland

From 21 Feb 2019 to 24 Feb 2019

[1 hour]

Reviewed by Chloe Klein, 22 Feb 2019

We begin the night gathered in the entranceway of the Town Hall, hearing the call of light and sound escaping from the inner doors. There is a sense of anticipation and curiosity about what is around the corner as we line up around the foyer. The printed programme invites us to take photos and videos as desired throughout the performance.

We are beckoned through the doors by performers to see a scaffolding structure that commands and obstructs view of the space no matter where you are. One side offers large platforms/steps that climb up to a white elevated dance floor. Beside, in front, on stage, above, inside- everywhere is a space of performance. The spaces are carved by the scaffolding itself, creating nooks and obstacles for travel and sightlines. Behind the structure, the musicians are set up on the stage, with further steps onstage providing yet more seating and performance options. The structure becomes the dominant choreographic feature of the evening as it invites migration of the performers, and us as audience members. No space in the room goes unexplored by body or eye.

The performers rove throughout the room between choreography and improvisation, solo and in partnerships, unlocking and revealing new features of the structure for us to explore. The smallness and closeness of certain spaces make room for intimate moments of connections with performers. The improvisational and nomadic nature of the work makes each eye contact a sacred and unrepeatable moment, even beyond the transience dance already boasts as a form. Each performer dances with humanity, and brings a unique movement aesthetic to the work.

Eden Mulholland's music, performed live, (with entrancing vocal contribution from performer Hannah Lynch) injects life into the Town Hall, proving him again to be a versatile collaborator and skilful artist. Mulholland understands the dynamics of live dance performance, and the band works responsively to the event.

Adding yet another layer of sensory shrouding to the space, Rowan Pierce's AV design envelops the town hall in otherworldliness and brings the experience into 3D. There are several moments where the performers complement the AV design as the dominant visual feature as light is harnessed in creative ways. These moments vary between humorous and enchanting, and I find myself staring at the ceiling to figure out how these are achieved.

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Theatreview review continued:

As audience it's easy to feel overwhelmed in the face of choice and abundant sensory provocation. I feel one of the strengths of this experience is the complementary blend of performance, choreography, set design, live music, lighting, and projection to activate a welcoming, unpressured space. The performers are gentle and inviting in ushering us through moments of transition and uncertainty. Despite the nomadic experience, which can often be unsettling, I feel we are held carefully and with consideration throughout the event. The result is engagement enabled to be playful and curious, rather than hesitant. I see plenty of audience around me taking advantage of this, and the withdrawn preferences of other audience members is respected.

MOVEMENT OF THE HUMAN is a worthy sequel to *RUSHES* and is a genuine, intimate, and *fun* immersive performance experience. Johnston and her creative team have engineered an unexpected, uplifting, and engaging way to navigate the Town Hall. For me, the success of *MOVEMENT OF THE HUMAN* is encapsulated by a friend who came with me- a first time contemporary dance-goer. "That was so different. I totally enjoyed it and I want to see more".

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NZ Herald Review

Auckland Fringe Festival: Week One - a sensory riot

25 Feb, 2019 5:00am

🕒 5 minutes to read



Movement of the Human's immersive combination of light, sound and movement made everything one large work of art. Photo / Andi Crown

NZ Herald

Dance, Physical Theatre

Movement of the Human transformed the Auckland Town Hall Concert Chamber into a multi-level, surround sound and light-altered space. Twenty performers occupied every available niche in and around a raised central platform. At the far end of the space, a second raised stage held a six-piece band augmented by dancer-musicians.

Eden Mulholland's music was a multi-layered mix which created shifting moods and kept everything moving along. A mix of quiet and loud, cycling drones and propulsive rhythms, sultry bass and chirpy table, with soaring vocals from Hannah Lynch, at times it was relaxingly dreamy.

The dancers moved around the space, lined the walkways, soloed under the stage scaffolding, slithered over vertical surfaces and climbed up to the high platform for ensemble passages and quick trios. Stellar duets from some of New Zealand's leading dancers featured, poignant and tender, brief narratives of desire and argument.

The immersive combination of light, sound and movement created a dance party feel with the audience free to roam and mingle with performers, socialise with one another, or find a place to sit and absorb the goings on. Digital projections across the walls and the bodies inside the room made everything one large work of art.

Reviewer Raewyn Whyte:

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NZ Entertainment Podcast, Feb 22, 2019

Words Yulia White

What is the Movement of the Human?

Soul, kiss, protest, freedom, dance, voice, hands, body. You name it. Personally, to me, it's life.

MOTH (movement of the human) is a creative design company developed by Malia Johnston with creative collaborators Rowan Pierce, musician Eden Mulholland and Ian Hammond. Their production captures powerful emotions and filters it into movements of dance, music and sonic sounds. It throws performers with the audience, who have no idea what to expect prior and during the show.

It's about unveiling the plot. What kind of story? It's your own. The production of this story is unique, its not your typical classical ballet or theatre. If you love big orchestras, then Moth may be a foreign concept, however, you may also be pleasantly surprised.

I smiled during the show, was amazed as I engaged visually with the performers. Like myself, you will wonder and you will question your sanity! It's totally up to you how you decide to act or conduct your behaviour during the show.

Perhaps, the most natural reaction I observed during the performance, was a child's amongst the audience. There was a 2-3 year old girl, who was dancing, clapping and duplicating the movement of the artists. She was the only one who got the show the way it was meant to be. She was entwined with the music, beholding dance, her childlike connection the key to its success. She felt it perfectly, others a little more cautiously.

When you are not sitting down in front of the stage, take time to walk around and observe, feel and participate. MOTH tries to reconnect with your mind. We live in a bubble at a rushed pace, but the show demands we slow down. Interact with the music, forget your daily routine, and just follow the lead.

It's not an easy task. Powerful sounds get through your skin, modern and contemporary movements remind you of your past, it takes you back to the time when you were careless and exposed to the world. Remember those tunes that would pump through your stereo and cause you to dance around the room with insane energy? That's how I felt watching Moth. All right, maybe not exactly like that, but you get the idea.

This idealistic group of individuals deliver a freedom of movement that humans don't always want to reconnect with. Now, to go back to my first paragraph, and answer the question: What is the movement of the human? After seeing the show I feel I know this. Keep an open mind and I'm confident you will to.