

Australia's free national arts tabloid's intimate response to the 1996 Adelaide Festival. In this issue: Maly Theatre's *Claustrophobia*, Doppio Teatro, Bang on a Can, Ethereal Eye, Pierre Henry's Berlin, Jordi Savall, Scriabin, Handspring Puppet Company, Michael Kieran Harvey

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The 1996 Adelaide Festival is just passing mid-point. A whole new set of performances are arriving just as the first set are enjoying the interrogations they warrant and provoke.

Questions about ecstasy as transcendent and as reductive, as spiritual, as totalitarian. The focus is about to be shared with the visual arts as Artists' Week starts up and many of the questions already raised are not about to go away—as narrativity opens out to more possibilities, as audience involvement and engagement are tested visually (Orfeo), viscerally (La Fura dels Baus) and sexually (Annie Sprinkle).

The Australian performance commissions (save the powerful *Excavation* and the rapidly maturing and sensual *The Black Sequin Dress*) are vulnerable, barely formed, intellectually and emotionally undernourished. *The Ethereal Eye*, despite passages of fine Synergy-played composition (Jonathan Mills) and Margie Medlin's transforming lighting, is first and last a dance work, the promise of synthesis and hybridity reduced to wrap around musique concrete, wrap around percussion, wrap around projections, musicians tucked up the back out of harm's way, designer Mary Moore's great sense of danger and challenge held in check. This is history held in check, rendered abstract, quaintly neoclassical, framed in a litany of modernist dance techniques. Red Shed's *Station 2: Eye of the Other*, overburdens itself with issues to the point of becoming television soap, doesn't know how to deploy its technologies and takes too long setting up its narrative before getting to its promising premise of relative subjectivities using scenes repeated like nightmare variations (at their best in the cinematic episodes with Dennis Moore's cab driver). *Solstice* confirms the difficulty of transforming a reflective poem-novel into a semi-rock concert setting in which Adelaide remains an abstraction shorn of social, political, even musical reality. It's the other side of the *Eye of Another* coin. There are talent and skill in all these works, but presenting world premieres in an international festival setting is punishing.

These doubts aside, the festival is alive with a furious energy and curiosity. The recurrence of inventive use of film, video and sound as integral components of many works, the multiple skills of Australian and overseas performers, the persistence and deepening of debate over Kosky's chosen themes, the communality of artists and audiences at venues and at Red Square make this an enquiring, epic and yet intimate festival.

Keith Gallasch

Claustrophobia, Maly Theatre of St Petersburg, Festival Theatre March 8

Shatter acid. Walls become so white that conscious control of thought becomes impossible.

Reasoning so mad that a meal becomes a murder—vodka kindling jealousy, lust, revenge. Actions of sanity dissolved long ago.

Men magically slide up walls with desire, tubas leap through the window. A rake grows from watering, but love itself does not grow. Iced lakes crack with a ballerina's foot, the soul so ordered into a fixed dance that one no longer feels one's own feet call....

Icons of Russian history are so inscribed into the body that there is only either Pavlova, Pushkin, or vodka (fights over Pushkin, after vodka, between ballets) and an inability to sense anything more.

This is brutal entrapment. The disease of unification forcing one to succumb.

A tuba examines a dead body which begins to sing. *Does it matter to be alive. Does it matter that I ever had a soul.* I hear your heartbeat marching through the curl of a marching band. Keep marching..

This is music-theatre, dance-theatre, theatre-theatre, where boundaries and borders, truth and lies become the same dance. Ruched curtains ascend and descend on something that has always been. *Laugh, eat, shit, keep shattering...*

Zsuzsanna Sobosolay

Claustrophobia, Maly Theatre of St Petersburg, Festival Theatre March 8

On the night of the election we were urged by politicians of both sides to count our lucky stars that we lived in a smoothly functioning democracy where a change of government can take place peacefully and without a drop being spilt. Well, yes. But something in me screams that we have allowed (begged it would seem by the result) this reactionary party to crunch into power without a bang and with hardly a whimper. In such a smooth democracy (smooth of course because the bumps are hidden or ignored) we are (we are constantly told) 'bored' by politics or 'cynical' of its representatives. So we keep our passions for sport (those old enough will remember that Malcolm Fraser promised us this) food, sex and—very occasionally—for art.

Real Time

Published by

OpenCity Inc.

P O Box 847

Potts Point 2010

NSW Australia

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These thoughts occasioned by the Maly's *Claustrophobia*, a show that for all the above reasons and many others is not easy to absorb—but impossible for this viewer to ignore.

There are it seems hidden battle lines between the personal-political and the social-political. And the Festival has uncovered traces. Personal-political shows face the charges of 'narrowness' and 'indulgence', whilst social-political shows are charged with 'naivete' and/or 'didacticism'. A participant at one of the forums believed that feminism had narrowed the lens to the level of minute daily living and left the larger questions of planetary suffering out of range. At least two shows at this festival prove her worries unfounded—the personal-political when operating at its most intense has ramifications way beyond the individual and the mundane.

One of the panelists at the forum responded that he did not believe that art could change society and that he could only be true to himself in his work. Fair enough. But what do you do when the society within which you work as an artist is changing around you to such a degree that it is hard to hold to a sense of self long enough to be true to it?

Well, perhaps you do as Maly did in creating *Claustrophobia*—a sprawling, fascinating, demanding, problematic, wearing, exhilarating, confusing, annoying, funny, passionate and finally deeply moving theatrework. It is a show about "ubiquists", as they announce early on, chameleons able to adapt to any situation, trying to understand what the present situation is and to separate it from the past. It is a show that takes place in a crumbling space, able to be broken out of, but equally falling down around them. The space is filled with ghosts—most immediately Mandelstam and Nabokov, and beyond them Chekhov and Gogol and even Goethe—ghosts to be recognised, argued about and exorcised before any forward movement can happen. More general and insidious demons than those are revealed—alcohol (a terrifying scene of the transformation of a jolly Russian cooking with his jolly wife into a violent brute terrorising the woman to the point where she screams out the rollcall of her sufferings as a Russian woman); education (the tight repression of a technical lecture transformed into a teacher-student wet dream fantasy); corruption (bodies lying twitching like a Meg Stuart scenario as the perpetrator of some agricultural pollution is tracked down); and again and again examples of untrammelled male totalitarian power.

Within this lies one of the unresolved problems of the piece. Given that it is the exorcism of corrupt male energy that is at the heart of the play, it is difficult to understand the marginal position of the women in much of the action. They remain the images of suffering and puerile sexual fantasy, or they dance around the action commenting on it indirectly but never directly engaging with it. It is the men who embody not only the enemies of the past but also the energy for the future. In that extraordinary scene of discussion in the centre of the show when all activity stops and the actors sit around arguing about writers and alcohol and the U.S. and France, one would have thought that the very voices that needed to be heard were the virtually silent women who could have provided a real alternative to the male energy abounding. But they don't get a word in. Perhaps this is another play. Perhaps it has to be recognised first. And who am I to suggest it.

The overwhelming feeling at the end is of a trapped generation, weighed down by the past, trapped in the present. The movements are therefore always upward (floating on a bed, drifting up a wall, climbing a drainpipe and finally levitating out through the power of song); or outward (either through those wonderful arched windows, or bit by bit beating out through the walls only to climb back in again to continue the fight). It is a potpourri of styles and genres driven forward by the momentum of its search for deliverance. Early on one of the troupe, balanced precariously on the edge of a drum as the band plays around him, calls out a rollcall to the older generation of all that the youth are not. Apart from a quick nod to Beatles-Schmeatles and Rolling-Schmolling he doesn't, however, say what they are. And this is what we are left with. A group of extraordinary young artists playing a mute orchestra, waiting for the words of the song to emerge.

Richard Murphet

Captaine Humes Musicall Humors (London, 1605), Jordi Savall, Solo Viola da Gamba, St Peters Cathedral, March 9

Compared with the "Howl" of Kronos/Ginsberg and the pyrotechnical madness of the Adelaide Chamber Orchestra's H.K. Gruber, the "soft" music of the Elizabethan warrior Captaine Hume seemed daringly quiet. After the fretless revolution three centuries ago, when violins and cellos fiddled their way to the top, it seems that frets are on the march again. Strange though that, some thirty years into the early-music-on-original-instruments revolution, the instrument itself—the viola da gamba or leg viol—should still be deemed to require considerable attention and explanation. Interspersed with his exquisite playing Jordi Savall made interesting comments about his viol and in case we missed it the programme provided two extended, and to a large extent repetitive, commentaries on the instrument. By comparison, of the Chinese pipa which accompanied Kronos we were told absolutely nothing. Because it was oriental or because, in this age of world music, familiarity was assumed? And of course, H.K. Gruber needs no introduction! At \$4 to \$5 a hit, can't someone get the programs right? If it was assumed that the audience was unfamiliar with the viola da gamba it was strange programming which had the entire evening devoted to a single composer rather than using the opportunity to reveal a range of da Gamba music styles—something to which we were only treated in the generous series of encores. After watching Gerard Depardieu as the anguished viola da gamba player in *Tous les matins du monde* it was a delight to see the introverted musician behind the hulk.

Peter Bishop

Ambient Bang, Bang on a Can, The Playhouse, March 9

Ambience and bang? Surely an oxymoron: ambient music usually embracing ideas of water, wind and sand, or territories we'd rather be in: rural, animal, perhaps arachnid, but definitely non-venomous, ignoring the other aspects of immediacy—discomfort, excess heat or noise.

In their second concert, Bang on a Can expand the dimensions of ambience to include urban pump and glitch, smog and ice-flavours less about the comfort of mothers' milk than about teeth and tongue engaging new textures, flavours, densities.

Certainly, Eleanor Hovda's *Mountain Goat File* is a pellucid and lyrical landscape suggesting hoof on crumbling rock and a double bass playing under ice. But Michael Maguires' hot jam of a piece, *Tristan, Doris, and Geraldo*, makes a different landscape: a rich layered cake [how many layers can you take?] of a concerto using instruments and tape deck less as support frame for piano virtuosity (although there's plenty of that) than a reminder of resonances usually left out of composition. Morning-after headaches,

channel-switching on American TV, blonde Doris having a bad Day, Wagner's Tristan and glissandi from Beethoven do not so much interrupt as invert the notion of concerto as high point amongst the low points of urban mania.

Each instrumentalist also layers the cake with nuts (and bolts), fruits (and detritus), cajoling textures that grate against, or multiply and compound, their usual flavours. The result is no cacophony, but a densely architectonic piece measured (like a city) against its own heights and densities of material. A far more provocative essay on drawing architecture out of the densities of human experience than the virtually sycophantic Seidler exhibition (the Grollo Tower proposal for Melbourne) in the Festival Theatre foyer.

Lisa Moore on piano exhibits more of the skill highlighted in her playing of Rzewski's *Piece #4* in Bang's first concert programme. Maintaining sonority amongst this density is an achievement in itself, and tribute to the finesse of these musicians.

The reality of each instrument already so thoroughly questioned, the stage is cleared for a solo that is surely going to be larger than a solo. Woodwind player Evan Ziporin has composed a piece for the group's cellist, Maya Beiser, in the Balinese Kebyar style, playing on her name (Maya: 'illusion'). To watch Beiser play is indeed a questioning of reality, with 18 overdubbed levels with the cello replicating and replacing the lovely hollow gongs of the gamelan, at the same time asserting its stringed quality—the foreign and familiar teasing each other in textures and assumptions. How many hands play this? As in Balinese music, there are ghosts and daemons dancing with her.

The highlight is near the piece's end, with Beiser playing the simplest line, leaving virtuosic parts to the overdub. The effect separates virtuosity from virtuoso, opening to the worlds hovering, squabbling, wondering and singing within the piece, and not the wires of the piece itself.

Player manifestos in the programme describe a melding with the instrument, a mediumistic notion common to musicians; instruments dissolve as the tongue dissolves food, transforming it into a substance of the interior body—*With what ears of the body do we hear?*

The final question of the programme was posed by the provocative inclusion of Philip Glass's *Two Pages*, his first piece using the by now familiar "additive process". With Glass's characteristic overblowing of volume, he cautions that it is "the best way to clear a room". Indeed, a few patrons do leave, despite Bang's more restrained approach. But amongst the walkouts, the fidgets, the gossips, the giggles, and despite a few slips in cello and percussion, an harmonic overtone resonance begins to reflect back from the walls—a space to allow echoes of earlier ghosts. Where is your body in relation to the previous pieces? How tired are you? How far have you been walking? The games of the listening mind falling into distraction.

This piece is a challenge, because of the virtuosic restraint required by the players, because it questions the sense of time involved in listening. Patterns turn and change and fracture and turn again, confronting our desire for progression and denouement. Not quite elegaic, the performance nonetheless is a reflection on the architectures of desire, need, patience, absorption, reception—an examination of which is never *passe*. Bang on, Bang on a Can.

Zsuzsanna Soboslay

Preludes to an Exile Doppio Teatro, March 6

I enter Cann's Secondhand Furniture store, walk between piles of tables, chairs, beds, wardrobes, suitcases, plastic, wood, fabric, vinyl, china and metal, veer left and there's the installation. The chaos of the shop arranged, ordered and displayed; still unmistakably a part of the emporium, but something else as well.

A line of benches supports tall, triangular structures that are neither ships' sails, nor the giant limbs of industrial looms, but tilt at both with all their implicit narratives of passage, migrant dreamings and factory sweatshops in suburban backyards.

Preludes to an Exile is a performance installation that explores the worlds of family business, local enterprise, the rhythms and routines of work, various manifestations of exile and the negotiations women in particular make across the environments of paid labour and domestic responsibilities.

Tea-breaks, the relief of undressing at the end of a long shift, folding laundry, cutting clothes from rolls of coloured cotton—the relentless patterns of the small factory or workshop provide the dramatic and the rhythmic framework. But Doppio's portrait is no sentimental nostalgia, no echo of John Howard's romantic championing of the small business. Instead this production exposes some of the mythologies of this "lucky country"; asks us to consider the cultural and psychological cost of the migrant dream of "a better life" that has carried so many people across so many seas and continents. Look how hard, and in what shit jobs, some of these first generation migrants have had to work!

And as I'm pondering all this, *Preludes to an Exile* shifts tone and texture. This is, after all, not a realist expose of backroom assembly lines, nor simply a tale of immigrant hardship and disappointment. These people have both dreams and dignity, and amid the drone of machinery, memories, hopes, humour and fragments of stories that hint at whole histories of war and loss bubble to the surface in words, gesture and movement—just momentarily—before sinking back into the landscape of repetition. And in their wake, they leave tantalising glimpses, unanswered questions and a powerful mosaic of exile—not only exile from a homeland but also various states of internal and internalised exile—as one of the Writers' Week speakers suggested, perhaps the dominant paradigm of twentieth century life.

I found *Preludes to an Exile* resonant and thought provoking and Doppio Teatro's mix of community theatre and contemporary performance practices exciting, bold and intriguing—a theatre of real possibilities for our multi-cultural society.

Noelle Janaczewska

Nannette Hassell, Jonathan Mills, Mary Moore, Margie Medlin, Synergy, Leigh Warren Dancers, *The Ethereal Eye*, Norwood Concert Hall, March 10

I especially enjoyed the solo work of Byron Perry, whose turns seemed to bring embodiment to the ethereal idea. He would bring sudden muscle into a turn, a whipping fraction of speed through an arm or knee that added a dynamic—like a comment—to the general shape of the movement.

There is also a central segment where the percussion first increases intensity in volume and the dancers, one by one, begin to circle the floor—Leigh Warren first, describing a circle whilst rotating his arms (a pelican taking flight). Another dancer joins, taking on the former's movement and releasing him/her into another dynamic—a texture of different level or speed, as if

inspiration, taken on by another, multiplies and divides and releases another and another shape that cuts and queries the first. The element of danger—or perhaps I mean, the possibility of meeting, of *construction* (architecture is, after all, not just the idea)—felt like an important dynamic.

The idea—as stated in the programme note—of a focus on spatial *rather than* political or biographical worries me. Space is political—has to be fought for. And perhaps ether too has to be embodied (and what could be more embodied than a contemporary dancer's limbs and torso?).

It was difficult sitting in the back row of this performance and trying not to desire more weight in the dancers' bodies and less pointing in their arms. Whilst looking for aether's "moving and rising, forming, changing" with the ethereal eye, one also sees the dancers with a certain uniform erectness of neck which perhaps impedes the energy flow. I would like to see it many times (and when the piece has been well worked-in) to see if I would absorb the body-as-ethereal mathematics better.

Zsuzsanna Soboslay

Woyzeck On The Highveld, Handspring Puppet Company, Union Hall, March 8

Interesting that two of the only three classic dramatic texts performed in the theatre selection at the Festival are performed by puppets (the third by a man with a taperecorder). Of these two, Georg Buchner's *Woyzeck* is one. And an odd text at that—discovered decades after the author's death in the mid 19th century as a series of unnumbered scenes. It can be done in just about any order—and the order chosen will reflect what the company doing it wants to say with the play.

This is the first working class tragedy: poor Private Woyzeck trapped in the madness of the German army, driven to distraction by the manipulation of those in command, by his own oversensitised imagination and by the flirtations of his lover, Marie, with a cardboard cutout drum major. Driven to murder and suicide. A film by Werner Herzog emphasised the play's social dimension—a realistic look at the violent craziness of society. Renato Cuocolo last year placed the play in a mental asylum, trying to catch the inner workings of this 'patient' with the Doctor presiding. Corrupt power, inner trauma, fatalistic metaphysics, religious guilt, jealousy, all jostle for command here, all are interdependent, the line of cause and effect does not run cleanly from one to another.

Woyzeck as puppet. The metaphor is crystal clear and appropriate. And in Handspring's production the result is ingenious, entrancing and occasionally provocative. In this reading the whole society are puppets: the Captain and the Doctor like animated Georg Grosz sketches, the Drum Major like a rubbery member of the Village People, Marie caught forever in an intense and humourless mode, and Woyzeck haunted, slightly grey of face, a death mask of a man.

So who—in this metaphor—are the manipulators? Well, human beings are. Huh?! Run that by me again. Not that there is a disjunction in practice between puppet and puppeteer, the one winking at the audience as s/he leads the other to tragic end. Quite the opposite. The focus and connectedness of the puppeteers is almost as transfixing as the wonderfully expressive puppets themselves. But manipulation of the metaphoric kind is there in the form of the grinning, cheeky, flesh and blood master of ceremonies. He is the malevolent force. The point is brought home in the most chilling scene, putting the puppet rhinoceros through its hoops as a circus animal by use of whip and threat and scornful disrespect. In that scene and the selling of the knife, human evil, grinning at its effect, is revealed to a level not remotely approached by the buffoon army power figures. This guy is not crazy. He'll sell you death for the kick it gives him. And he'll charm you all the while. The figure is one of Handspring's additions to the play. Who is he but the man you gave your trust to at the start of the show.

The inner workings of Woyzeck's overworked and overtuned existential paranoia are graphically there before us in gritty black and white on the video screen crafted by director and filmmaker William Kentridge. The portents he sees in the stars are there for us to see too. These too are augmentations. This is a charming and bleak version of Buchner's condensed horror story. Strange then that I ended feeling that the play was, for the present, out of its time. In the face of the dark and complex visions witnessed elsewhere at the festival, it seems a simplistic and old fashioned world view. This is a pitch to leave it alone for a few decades. Handspring have given it a fine send-off.

Richard Murphet

Ruth is Sleeping, Michael Keran Harvey, Elder Hall, March 6
Adelaide Symphony Orchestra, Thebarton Theatre, March 7.

War is a dumb idea by Warren Burt: shades of Depardieu's piano solo in *Green Card*, madmen, metaphysical pretension, embarrassment (do I really need this concert?). But then came the Scriabin (whew!) and suddenly you realised that *War is a dumb idea* had probably been delivered note-perfect, the way you were meant to hear it. Sonic art on acoustic piano. As it turned out, those who stayed away missed one of the Festival highs, and I mean artistic highs. Scriabin's *Vers la Flamme* was sheer magic, not just because it's a great piece (you can hear the fire and feel the heat and see the moths and smell the dust) but because MKH is a pianist of extraordinary importance, one for whom the instrument is simply a natural extension of his complex and charismatic presence. Fancy phraseology seems inadequate and the word "talent" is totally inappropriate. Think of Liszt, Prokofiev, Godowsky, Horowitz - he's in that league. And more to the point, he's using his phenomenal mental and physical powers to bring us well nigh definitive interpretations of the music of his contemporaries, as well as his own. The Carl Vine *Sonata 1990* and Harvey's *Toccata DNA (1993)* were equally breath-taking: mini-rave from Stephen McIntyre and loud "Bravo" from Jonathan Shin'Ar. Clearly a pianist's pianist.

The program provided valuable perspectives on Scriabin and on late 20th century piano music, indicating just how immediately practising musicians of this calibre provoke, inspire and inform the writing of the time. Interesting, too, the meld of French influence ranging from direct associations with Messiaen chord structures to the whimsical spontaneity of improvised ornament, indirectly filtered down from Debussy *et al* through the Creole tradition to Coltrane, revisited and formally revitalised by Frank Zappa (*Ruth is for Sleeping*) and Peter Macek (*Small Leaps*). This was no kindergarten-of-contemporary-composition concert; this was stirring, staggering, mind-blowing stuff. Minor problems with audio feedback, but watch out for the broadcast.

On arrival at cosy old Thebarton Theatre on Thursday the goss in the foyer was that only the elephants were missing, which wasn't far off the mark. Seated in row four from the front, I was closer to the conductor than the first flute so I worked overtime at first to piece instrumental sounds together; but after a while it all gelled. Scriabin's last orchestral tone-poem *Prometheus* (more fire) is scored for piano, orchestra and chorus with an optional part for "colour keyboard". Geoffrey Douglas Madge proved an authoritative soloist in a work vastly different from the Piano Concerto and musically more challenging than the *Poem of Ecstasy*. The chorus

enhanced the sound by working as a kind of acoustic glue and providing (as was intended) additional colours. As for the keyboard-generated lighting, it's hard to know exactly what Scriabin had in mind and whether he would have preferred this approach (24 pairs of lamps on either side of the ceiling flashing vibrant colours over eight outside bandages draped across the rafters, staggered to give 16 strips in the centre) or the laser-beam techniques of ELO in the 70's...or something different again. Who knows?

David Porcelijn's exhaustively ebullient routine on the podium appeared slightly out of place for Messiaen's *L'Ascension*, a symphonic meditation from 1933. With or without baton his effusive and somewhat angular motions were less than discreet, but orchestral players are made of tough stuff and they gave of their best. It was an intense musical experience involving subtle shifts from brassy ritualistic pomp through a range of worldly emotions towards an ethereal, other-worldly serenity which quite literally left the listener (or part thereof?) suspended in mid air. The music is, of course, directly related to textual quotations from the Bible and the Catholic liturgy, but to read these after the event (as I did) seemed only to reaffirm one's initial response.

Down to earth again after the second interval we entered the hallowed precincts once more for the *Alleluia*, a monumental work for voices and orchestra in seven movements by Russian composer Sofia Gubaidulina. She writes that the most important element of this music is a colour scale inspired by Scriabin, although "contrary to him colour in my composition is treated melodically, not rhythmically". (A predictable re-run of the lighting effects mentioned earlier, but on a more subtle scale.) This is undoubtedly a work of major significance, extremely impressive even on first hearing. The chorus work was virtuosic, contrapuntal textures and grim dissonance beautifully assuaged by cool, passionate solos in the style of Russian Orthodox chant. More than minimalist, the work featured repetitive rhythmic fragments of fractured sound, life-threatening forces punished by sinister silence. (A pity the awesome pauses were so glaringly checked and counted.) Ashleigh Tobin's superbly effervescent organ solo in the penultimate movement deserved more amplification; next time (hopefully) he'll be strutting his stuff on the Town Hall organ instead. An unusual and stimulating concert of profound music, well programmed and well-paced.

Di Weekes

Pierre Henry & Son/Re, Walter Ruttmann, *Berlin: Symphony of a City* (1927), Her Majesty's Theatre, March 9

I'm thinking that one of the most interesting things about this festival is that having so many events squashed up against each other enables you to take a home course in comparative performance studies. I'm interrupted by the arrival of a beautiful girl who sits next to me as the film is about to start. Close on her heels comes the composer. He bows and turns like a conductor, without orchestra, to his sound desk.

I'm wondering why he didn't just add on a soundtrack and save on airfares and accommodation. But then, I think, here is a film taken out of the archive for inspiration and as accompaniment to the sound (as music). This explains the periodic black strips which Henry said he had added to the film to allow him to prolong the sound, alienation devices bringing me back to the sound and back to the theatre. (I ask the beautiful girl what she thinks so far as a loud ticking leads in to the film.) This explains the presence of the maestro fiddling with knobs and buttons at the sound desk below the screen. (My mind wanders to dedicating a poem to her.) This explains some of the quirky juxtapositions of sound and image alerting you to the choices being made. (She says, "It's hypnotic. It's mesmerising.") What it didn't explain was why Pierre Henry didn't go further.

The musical commentary is argely ironic, clever, self-reflexive, but at other times in tune with the film, echoing its heroic, fast-paced montage, its homage to the group, to the machine, to the city, to the metropolis. The film celebrates the relentless, seething anthill man has made with ironic glances at the high-stepping Prussian military and the jerky movements of people juxtaposed with the jerky movements of monkeys. The most poignant moment is when a beautiful girl (Jewish? Gypsy?) with dark eyes leaps off a bridge in terror. Henry handles all of this well with his loops of found sounds, his layering of real and created sounds, but I long for stronger stuff. After all, this is a city captured in time, an historic moment from dawn to dusk. And probably everyone in that city to which the great nightmare of the 20th century is about to happen, is now dead. There are signs of this everywhere in the film. It is a homage to something greater than the individual, a paean to...

At Friday's Festival Forum on dance, a question was cleverly raised about whether art should be political, something about an artist without politics being like an assassin without a gun. Ohad Naharin, the artistic director of the Batsheva Company, cleverly replied he didn't like guns. Neither do I. Nor do I like it when critics say they wish artists had done something some other way. Nonetheless, I wish Pierre Henry had dug a little deeper in his celebration of Berlin.

In the final moments of the film loud explosions accompany the fireworks that occurred sixty-nine years ago. They continue when the image has gone to black, for me a hollow sound, reminding me about that argument about how postmodernism doesn't grapple with history, it just poaches from it. I turn to the beautiful girl next to me to ask what she thinks, but she has gone. I leave the theatre. I am standing on a metaphorical bridge looking into a metaphorical river for a metaphorical girl.

Richard James Allen.

Hypothetical Exchange: Ohad Nahin (Batsheva Dance) and Meg Stuart (Damaged Goods)

- ON Sadness is living only once.
 MS Bleakness is living at all.
 ON There is joy in technical ability to transcend restriction.
 MS Focus on restriction, restriction engendering form.
 ON Playfulness with a hamster on a bald head, turnings of the body mimicking the motion of an animal over a landscape of skin
 MS Bald, hamstrung, replaying the motions of things breaking, not breaking from under the skin
 ON A single dancer occasionally puncturing a circle.
 MS Held within a grid, tailing, snuffing, prodding till they are broken.
 ON Building a phalanx of desire.
 MS Pockets of need building nothing.
 ON Teasing—body as percussion, balletic bongo.
 MS Slapped by fate—body screams at itself, propelled with a laughter that won't break
 ON Laughing lines, personal history.
 MS Text faltering, receding from touch.
 ON The screaming of women bursting into a moment's hysteria, supported by the men dancing with them.
 MS Dancing, laughing, breaking ... alone.

Dervishes: To dance is to be centered in God, otherwise you fall over.

[In every dance, think of what propels the turn.]

Zsuzsanna Sobosolay

Open City, the publisher of RealTime is funded by the Australia Council, the federal government's arts advisory body, and the NSW Ministry for the Arts. Open City acknowledges the financial support of the Australian Film Commission.