

One Flat Thing, Reproduced

NERIDA DICKINSON

STRUT Dance cranks up the spectacle with this open air staging of William Forsythe's choreography.



One Flat Thing, Reproduced. *Image Rosalie O'Connor.*

Bringing exciting contemporary dance to Perth audiences, STRUT Dance cranks up the spectacle with this open air staging of William Forsythe's choreography.

An inspired choice of venue sites the distinctive setting of 20 long tables in the heart of the State Theatre Centre of Western Australia. The courtyard has vantage points around its edges both at ground level and looking down from the balcony walkways above. With entries from the street, shops and theatres, all with people milling about in the early evening, the event attracts many curious onlookers. The piece works well with a free-range audience and its various levels, layout, symmetry and angles all present challenges for dancers to maintain precise and accurate movements. STRUT Dance, the performers and this production make it all work with the lines of tables breaking the space in several dimensions, the performers moving around, between, on, over and under, and then moving the tables themselves in larger displays of enthusiastic force.

The choreography opens on a small scale, simple movements with matched pairs at a time. The interplay between performers is precise, a dialogue of limbs and poses. The performers move between the tables and take their positions in strict time with each other. Individuals move in to the performance space, as do pairs and small groups, space made as other groups leave. The dynamic forces are maintained and accentuated by mirroring, keeping synchronised

movements impressive but not reducing them to robotic mass displays. Performers evoke the essence of elegant fight choreography, with clashing and grappling, interspersed with moments of combination for mutual support in creation of poses and assistance in creating combined figures. Bodies, rise and fall with the table tops and legs segmenting the space to further emphasise the degrees of movement of each body part.

14 performers come together with their individual skills, talent and commitment, all working closely in this tightly coordinated ensemble piece. Performers are not only from Perth but from across Australia and New Zealand, reflecting the reach of STRUT Dance and the scale of its quest to develop independent dance artists.

Visually the stark metal tables contrast with the bright costumes originally designed by Stephen Galloway. Street clothes of slacks, t-shirts and socks allow for movements around, through and under the tables as performers step, run and slide, splashing colour through the various levels. Speakers around the courtyard pump Thom Willems' sound design into the space, a composition of industrial grind that lapses down into musical moments, before ramping up again into chaotic assault on the ears coinciding with explosions of movement.

STRUT Dance produces amazing work on a regular basis, but so little is appreciated by the general or even the theatre-going public in Perth. *One Flat Thing, Reproduced* is part of a larger Forsythe work, *The Questioning of Robert Scott*. As this work is usually only performed within major dance companies, it is a real treat to see it presented in such a prominent public display. Despite captivating choreography, sensitive sound design and tightly accomplished performance in a great venue, the most exciting outcome was the babble of intrigued conversations as the watching crowd dispersed, hopefully keen and ready to attend more contemporary dance work in future, ready to appreciate the exciting developments happening in their own city.

Rating: 4 stars out of 5

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Presented by STRUT Dance

Choreography William Forsythe

Music Thom Willems

Rehearsal Directors Cyril Baldy and Ayman Harper

Performed by Linton Aberle, Natalie Allen, Richard Cilli, Imanuel Dado, Sam Hall, Samuel Harnett-Welk, Storm Helmore, Louella Hogan, Lisa McLaughlan, Sarah Mealar, Sophia Natale, Alexander Perrozzi, Antonio Rinaldi and Strickland Young

The Courtyard, State Theatre Centre of Western Australia, Perth

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What the stars mean?

- **Five stars:** Exceptional, unforgettable, a must see
- **Four and a half stars:** Excellent, definitely worth seeing
- **Four stars:** Accomplished and engrossing but not the best of its kind
- **Three and a half stars:** Good, clever, well made, but not brilliant
- **Three stars:** Solid, enjoyable, but unremarkable or flawed
- **Two and half stars:** Neither good nor bad, just adequate

- **Two stars:** Not without its moments, but ultimately unsuccessful
 - **One star:** Awful, to be avoided
 - **Zero stars:** Genuinely dreadful, bad on every level
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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Nerida Dickinson is a writer with an interest in the arts. Previously based in Melbourne and Manchester, she is observing the growth of Perth's arts sector with interest.