

Excavate

Reviewed by Celeste Tripodi

<http://www.canberrareview.com.au/ed407.htm>

Created and performed by Jacob Lehrer and David Corbet. Presented by the Australian Choreographic Centre. Monday 22 August, 2005.

It has been a while since Canberra has experienced dance in such a unique form as contact improvisation, and the Australian Choreographic Centre has had the opportunity to work with leading exponents from Melbourne, Jacob Lehrer and David Corbet.

Excavate was in fact, exactly as its name suggests. Lehrer and Corbet revealed and extracted the principles of contact improvisation (gravity, weight, momentum, inertia, acceleration, counter-thrust and leverage) to invent a dynamic composition. The show began as a story of one man's journey, told to the audience by a projection at the back of the stage. However, the extemporisation turned the focus on the movement and the connectivity between the two dancers rather than the narrative. Having danced together for the past nine years, there was an unbelievable amount of chemistry between these two, they knew each others limits enough to perform tremendous and intimate creations seemingly subconsciously.

I found myself entrenched in their movement, and only when they danced separately I was reminded that there were two people on the stage rather than one entity. The main theme that I grasped was that of an intimate relationship – not just between two males but a relationship between anyone, be it lovers, friends or family. Although I wasn't aware if it was their purpose, there came across a sense of dependency, that love-hate relationship where although you want to escape the confines of another person's power over you, you are drawn back again and again unintentionally.

The lighting and technical design was somewhat disappointing, as the stage was lit and remained uninteresting. The music also, felt a little draining, as it was docile and didn't modify its melody. After saying this however, I was much more interested in the sounds of their movement, hitting the floor and walls, and their deep breaths that could be heard as music. So in this case, the lighting and sound didn't take away from the mood as a whole.

The 45 minutes of the performance passed quickly, and I could have enjoyed another 45 minutes after a quick interval, but unfortunately dancers get tired. Improvisation in dance is always taking a risk, and Excavate effectively captured the essence of confronting relationships and how we, mentally and physically, deal with these emotions. Lehrer and Corbet brought with them fantastically original movement that Canberra will hopefully see more of.