

THE AUSTRALIAN

Blissfully in their element

Deborah Jones | November 10, 2008

Triptych Choreography by Tess de Quincey and the dancers. De Quincey Co, CarriageWorks, Sydney, November 6. Tickets: \$30. Bookings: 1300 723 038. Ends November 15.

TESS de Quincey is one of the country's most serious, inquiring and accomplished dance artists and we don't see enough of her. She doesn't flood the market with her theatre work - teaching and research are a big part of her practice - so a new De Quincey Co piece is a rare gift.

Her theme in *Triptych* is nothing less than the essence of life; the air that sustains it, the electric impulses that enable thought and the water that makes up more than half the human body. While it isn't exactly a new idea to base a work on the elements, *Triptych* stands apart for the superb quality of performance and visual presentation and the luminous atmosphere it creates.

The work is intensely felt, with grace and elegance that come only from deep knowledge and understanding. And it looks and sounds fantastic, with a soundscape from The Necks keyboardist Chris Abrahams, Travis Hodgson's sympathetic lighting and sophisticated projections from Robin Fox and SamJames.

The audience - people can stand, sit on the floor, or bag a space on one of the benches set around Bay 20 at CarriageWorks - is taken gently on a three-part journey. Large screens, three of them of course, define the performance area and are a canvas for projections of the breeze-shaken blossoms of the first part, the calming waters of the third and the stunning Fox "oscillations" of the second, in which sound and image are intimately related.

On one level *Triptych* can be appreciated purely as a visual treat, a wash of sensation allowing room for meditation, rumination or daydreaming. In that respect alone it's quite a trip.

Then there are the ravishing performances from Peter Fraser, Victoria Hunt, Linda Luke and Lizzie Thomson. De Quincey's approach to movement is based partly on *butoh* but incorporates many other elements; it's not so much an aesthetic as a philosophy.

The dancers are a marvel, capable of apparently completely contradictory forces. They can look simultaneously completely grounded yet weightless, steely but liquid. Their bodies flicker with myriad tiny articulations, integrated into a mesmerising, highly disciplined and precise whole. This isn't movement worn like a kind of costume the dancer can easily shed. It's felt to the core, and is a privilege to experience.