

## realtime 124

### MELBOURNE INTERNATIONAL ARTS FESTIVAL

#### The primordial present

#### Urszula Dawkins: Melbourne International Arts Festival: Dance Territories

IN THE LAST MOMENTS OF LINDA LUKE'S STILL POINT TURNING, LUKE, LIKE A PENDULUM FINALLY ARRESTED, HOLDS HERSELF MOTIONLESS BEFORE THE AUDIENCE. FOR WHAT SEEMS LIKE MINUTES SHE WATCHES US, SWEAT TRICKLING DOWN HER CHEEKS WHILE A TERMINALLY SLOWING HEARTBEAT FORESHADOWS THE INEVITABLE LIGHTS-OUT.

The closing work in Melbourne Festival's curated dance season, Dance Territories, Still Point Turning's end-point set up a reverberating final resonance within two double-bill programs that rippled and shimmered together in a remarkable interplay of difference and harmony, touching, as their titles suggest, upon the sacred, the profane, rituals and the notion of 'now.'

Finally, Linda Luke's Still Point Turning: a series of collaged scenes, lyrical and strung together by suggestions of both mundane time and the grand cycles of life and death. Luke totters in rocky, uneven shoes like chunks of meteorite, cable-tied to her feet stepping back and forth mechanically to the sound of a voice reflecting on time and stillness. Her costume is part-Baroque and part steam-punk, coat tails and knickerbockers, elegantly ragged. A large pendulum swings back and forth across the stage, its continuity juxtaposed with Luke's ever-changing movement. Over time, a rear screen delivers moving black bars, lushly opening buds and dying blooms or fuzzy, static 'snow.' Shoes discarded, Luke becomes freer, sometimes reminiscent of a curious insect, flower or animal. She turns her coattails out to become bright red petals. Frog-like sounds suggest primordial swamp and seem to subsume her; the pendulum continues to swing.

Ultimately Luke seems to be played by the sounds, natural and unnatural, ticking and spoken alike; she's strangely expressionistic, jerking like a silent film character. Still Point Turning is theatrical, romantic, full of both play and decay—"for tomorrow we die"? It's a lush response to the relentless tick of the clock and, equally, to the finite heart beating—the final minutes stunning, as Linda Luke watches us and sweats; reduced to one living body whose time is slowed right down to nil.

Melbourne International Arts Festival & Dancehouse, Dance Territories: The Sacred and the Profane: Linda Luke, Still Point Turning, choreographer, performer Linda Luke, composer Vic McEwan, video Martin Fox, lighting Clytie Smith, costume Justine Shih Pearson, Dancehouse, Melbourne, 17–18 October