

Talking Arts



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Theatre Now Review: Metadata [Riverside]

By [Sabrina Stubbs](#) September 25, 2016

De Quincey Co have successfully created a distinctive and unforgettable performance that raises questions and ideas throughout audiences of all ages and backgrounds. The performance that has it all and satisfies even the most unartistic friend you have? *Metadata*. It consists of two dance-based performances, *Pure Light* and *Moths & Mathematics*, which combine a visually distinctive art-form like dance with the complex and misunderstood science of physics. You don't need to be a rocket scientist to enjoy their creation, but it might help in understanding the intricacies they are attempting to embody and explain in the two-hour show.

The first element of *Metadata* is *Pure Light* which features choreographer and dancer **Tess de Quincey** presenting an inhumane figure against a changing fluorescent scene. It is a thriller at its heart, without the cop-out of jump scares and gore, it oozes discomfort and transience with every ethereal noise. In the Arts-Science Exchange conversation that followed the Saturday night show there was a general audience feedback of unexplainable unease and shared awe at how Tess' body interacting with the music and projection that illuminated how light and the space a form is given can change, merge and affect one another. It is simple and a great entrance into the show, and the ten minutes between *Pure Light* and *Moths & Mathematics* was just enough for me to turn to my theatre-clueless friend that I had dragged to Riverside and see the excitement and confusion flash across his face. That's how you know the cast and crew have done an incredible job; when they manage to convert the people least interested in their topics – dance and science – into rapt viewers eager to discuss and interpret what they see, hear and feel.



Moths & Mathematics is the most open to interpretation and one I am still discussing to this day with friends. A serial story depicting two beings moving throughout the worlds and discoveries of physics, from molecules to space, no matter-based stone

was left unturned. Even slightly distanced themes such as the relationships between two people and fate felt as though they were part of the show. Performers **Tess de Quincey** and **Peter Fraser** admitted afterwards there is a bit of improvisation, encouraging the idea that the science of movement and feeling unexplainably move each dancer where they need to be when they need to be there. It's difficult to explain the plot of this piece because it progresses through multiple scientific ideas (many of which I didn't understand and didn't need to in order to appreciate it). Regardless of its intricacies and intelligence, it is re-watchable and open to interpretation.

What isn't open to interpretation is the quality of the design crew. The lighting, projection and sound were expertly integrated with the choreography witnessed, and each had their own standalone merits and wisdom. Composers **Pimmon** and **Warren Burt** created remarkable music that captivated on its own. There were familiar and alien sounds which flowed between scenes smoothly, and a lot of the feeling of vastness and chaos were courtesy of the soundtracks. The lighting designers **Sian James-Holland** and **Liam O'Keefe** also deserve recognition, especially when considering the poignant metaphors in *Pure Light* which would be less effective without the symmetrical hanging fluorescents of either side of the stage. In regards to costume, once again *Pure Light* was a standout in design innovation. **Claire Westwood's** decision to place de Quincey in a genderless, shadowy coat, like the product of a pure white lab coat and bleak dystopian hazmat suit, is a credit to her passion and expertise in the craft. It avoids distraction of identity and specificity for the dancer, encouraging the audience to feel vulnerability and constantly focus. Video creator for *Pure Light's* backdrop, **Martin Fox**, extended on the music, costume and lighting elements of claustrophobia but provided a much-needed balanced for the emotional intensity. **Boris Morris Bagattini**, the visual animator of *Moths & Mathematics*, has achieved the most amazing feat – live visual composition that differs and evolves over each night. It is the kind of artistic exploration you are unaware you were yearning for until you see it, and I hope Bagattini continues to get such unique opportunities to create motion graphics and visual effects that are affected by their scenario. If you are looking for a designer to keep an eye on, Bagattini is it, with experience working with **Ridley Scott** and **Guillermo del Toro**, he's an inspiration for Australian and international creators alike.

Metadata is the first performance piece of its kind, merging complicated education and artistic vulnerability in a previously unexplored form. It is the definition of successful and has the opportunity to positively affect every viewer. I sincerely hope there will be more shows like this discussing every aspect of science and history that is generally ignored or dismissed by students and mature adults unconcerned about the greater reality they are surrounded by. Everyone who worked behind the scenes, on stage, and post-show to make this interdisciplinary collaboration did a fantastic job and I look forward to whatever may come next.