

PRESS REVIEW

Slow down

Re-staged for Dance Theatre of Ireland

From 15th October to 6th November 2007

Premiere on 7th November 2007, at 8pm at The Pavillon Theatre, Dun Laoghaire

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Slow Down by Michael Seaver



There are lots of ways for choreographers to create physical humour, but unfortunately most of them aren't really that funny. They can try slapstick or parody, but really, all those custard pies and camped-up tangos are merely prompting our own pre-programmed canned laughter.

True humour comes from the ordinary things in our daily lives, as proved by most stand-up comedians' material: pathetic little desires and self-importances that are hilarious because we take them so seriously.

In *Slow Down*, Martine Pisani has propped up a straight-faced mirror of ourselves that never cracks however much we laugh in its face. It's simple. Take the stand-up's template and translate it into movement.

Except it's not that simple. All of Pisani's stage nous is harnessed in creating a subtle bonding between audience and performer, where the stage becomes a shared playground. Yes, *Slow Down* is a collection of set-pieces, but most of the time it is the audience that must provide the punch-line. The humour is never bawled, rather left dangling in front of our faces until we get the joke, and that usually comes effortlessly, thanks to simple conventions with a logical - or, more funnily, illogical - conclusion.

The six po-faced performers face playful tasks such as making a comfortable bed out of bodies or taking a popular song apart so different people have responsibility for humming the tune, speaking the lyrics, miming the words, speaking the backing vocals and dancing to the rhythms. These are delivered with perfect timing by all of the dancers and the episodes gather a slowly rolling pace that never flags.

A lot of the humour is quite male, and the sole female, Tania Pieri, often plays the straight-gal who just looks on the guys with stony indifference. Each performer captures individual versions of this presence, which is a brilliant combination of bemusement, world-weariness and tolerance, making the meaningless tasks all the funnier.

Often there's no more serious business than contemporary dance, but Pisani's keen eye and skilled hand have created a dance that is light and witty in its delivery but razor-sharp in its significance.

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