

Ever After Ever

By MCV
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Sydney Dance Company
State Theatre, The Arts Centre
(Until 14 July)
Tickets via www.ticketmaster.com.au or 1300 136 166



Photo: Jeff Busby

Graeme Murphy and the Sydney Dance Company (SDC) have always presented work that is stylistically eclectic but possesses a classical sensibility. *Ever After Ever* revisits several such works, reminding us how much Murphy and the company he has guided for 31 years have helped popularise Australian contemporary dance; simultaneously reinforcing notions that dance can be fun and sexy. As the *Village Voice* authoritatively stated, Murphy is "a lusty choreographer with an eye for what can be done with beautiful dancers to make audiences sigh in pleasure".

Framed by the opening and closing pieces, 1999's *Air and Other Invisible Forces* and the new work, *Short Stories*, Murphy's farewell production highlights his choreographic trademarks. Dancers of different sizes and body shapes, closely grouped with limbs intertwined, become an organic whole; the dance emerging from their tightly clustered bodies and gradually fragmenting to spread out over the stage. Murphy's startling way of rolling dancers over dancers, or stepping up and over other dancers, is another familiar highlight.

Sadly nothing is revived from the 1980s. The oldest work is *Berlin* from 1995, which brought Murphy's lusty side to the fore; set to pop songs (Iva Davies and Icehouse) rather than more abstract contemporary music, and incorporating another Murphy trademark of unusual partnering. The evening's centrepiece is a long and deliberately clichéd 'pas de deux' for two equally clichéd Berliners, a man in black stockings, garters and leather jacket, and a man in uniform (think Tom of Finland doing a tango with Frank 'n' Furter from the *Rocky Horror Show*). The nostalgic *Tivoli*, evoking the vanished world of variety acts, is a chance to display some even more uproarious camp in a 1930s fashion pageant as well as the athleticism that underlines the dancing of the female as well as male dancers.

The evening's concluding work, *Short Stories* (2007) reunites the SDC with its first resident composer Carl Vine. Murphy uses Vine's piano solos (here recalling the innovative, atonal work of Russian composer Alexander Scriabin) to create a series of short interludes that highlight the skills of each of the dancers as well as the company as a whole, again emerging from that embryonic Murphy 'huddle'.