

coffeebreak

Review ■ Alternative Routes Dance House ■ Wales Millennium Centre, Cardiff ★★★

Dancing around the boundaries

WALES' national dance company can teach you something about the boundaries and limitations of contemporary dance. □

Diversions' new experimental works, *Alternative Routes*, performed at their home base was a lesson in how conceptual choreography can take away from the joy of watching movement.

The first piece in the two-part programme, *Of Birds and Monsters*, is from Finnish-born company dancer Viivi Keskinen. □

The six dancers introduce themselves individually under a shaft of yellow light, revealing signs of mental instability through muscle contortions and twitches. Elements on stage also contribute to a sense of the random – a man in the shadows wheels around a barrow full of lemons. □

There is a feeling of struggling to break free from constraints of the mind and body,

initiated by Dane Hurst's superb solo in a corset. The dancers clearly have a keen sense of the music and the ensemble phrases where the group (three girls and three boys) comes together to propel the dance forward with real substance, energy and momentum.

As the dance progresses, however, the strange characters are not developed to their full potential to create a truly interesting piece. Instead movements feel cut and pasted together to create a disjointed whole. □

When the women change into sheer gown-like dresses, cover their faces with a murky liquid and couple off with the men, undertones of sexual struggle and abuse are prevalent. Following a touching and painful duet by Keskinen and Davin King, there is an uncomfortable and drawn out epileptic fit on stage, and this is followed by the man with the lemons singing a jazzy number while

dancers sway behind. Keskinen's choreography shows promise and originality, but the piece suffers by lacking any real explanation for the randomness.

The second work by Joanne Fong, *How to Use Curiosity in Ordinary Life*, displays ingenious use of lighting to coat the dancers in flickering scenes of moving leaves.

Maria Hayday stands out, dancing with beauty and fervour, throwing her silky limbs under the lights with vigour and precision.

The piece has a less deep or sinister message than Keskinen's, allowing the dancers to shine as repeated motifs crescendo to a period of pure physical celebration.

■ **Hannah Waldram**

■ **Alternative Routes will be performed again at the Dance House of the Wales Millennium Centre, Cardiff, tonight. For details, ring 08700 402000**