

Edinburgh Dance

Gelabert Azzopardi
Companyia de Dansa

Festival Theatre, Edinburgh

★★★★★

Cesc Gelabert comes across as a man at the height of his powers. A sleek intelligence touched with corporeal magic, the Barcelona-based choreographer returned to Edinburgh to lead nine dancers in the sophisticated, sexy neoclassical/contemporary hybrid choreography he calls his own. Dancing with silky grace among talented devotees, he is at once master and member of the gang, a dual role that few inhabit with such comfortable charisma.

This new double bill deftly holds its own. Both pieces share a fearless kinetic joy. Mixing, sorting, rubbing out, Gelabert manoeuvres bodies around the stage, moving them easily from solo to duet, trio to ensemble as one continuous, flowing surface - a river of choreography.

Sense Fi begins with the sound of water dripping. Gelabert pulls his dancers out of the shadows, as from a hat. Under the soft energy of a giant white lantern (props are perfectly balanced in these works), limbs spark and arc to Pascal Comelade's soundtrack, layered with sonic pulse, dusky Mediterranean tempos and saxophone riffs. Playing, coupling, racing, the dancers spiral as if the double helix is on the move.

With Handel's music as his guide, Gelabert invests Conquassabit with a more formal architecture. The tip-toe balances and curves remain, but there is also a controlled urgency at work. Crawling, jumping in arms, frog-hopping and falling, a wave of

Thrilling
... Gelabert
Azzopardi



movement is built from the first rumbles to a crescendo, leaving the bodies spent. Gelabert, often close to mime, is at its core, the mysterious agent of the action. In this thrilling whirlwind, even the material backdrop plays an active part, fashioned by the dancers into altarpiece, field of gold, sky and pulsing flesh itself.

Alice Bain