

Review: NICA presents CODA – with every ending, there’s a new beginning

By Clarice Lau

CODA – which runs from June 22 to July 1, is a contemporary circus performance set in an urban train station. Exploring a series of chance encounters between strangers, life’s priceless moments are highlighted with the combination of creative arts, high-energy dance and breathtakingly stunning circus feats.

Under the direction and choreography of Megan Jones, present Head of Performance Studies at NICA, 23 extremely talented second-year students at NICA who are currently com-

pleting their Bachelor of Circus Arts degree offer an enthralling performance that combines excitement, happiness, thrills, humour and a tinge of sadness into a beautiful sensory experience.

Inspired by the theme “travelling on an urban train”, with settings in and around the train station, commuters carry pages from newspapers, suitcases of all shapes and sizes, travel on a travelator or waiting on the wooden bench for the train. People in trench coats walk by briskly as flexible, acrobatic and skilful tricks are carried out on the tightrope, trapeze and unicycle above, creating a bizarre but fascinating juxtaposition.

CODA aims to show the audience the nature of a series of chance encounters between strangers. People come and people leave. The performers exchange pages of the newspaper whilst making a step forward to their intended destinations, while sadness, depicted not just by the notion of people coming and going, but also symbolically by “the strike of lightning” and sounds of rain gave a complementary resonance. A couple in love made a momentous dance, which eventually ended with them parting.

If the tinge of sadness is a “condiment” of the perfor-



Photo: David Wyatt

A NICA performer defies gravity

mance, happiness proved to be the “main course” as laughter rang through the theatre, especially with a silent but comedic act that involved audience interaction. Excitement and thrills were also prevalent espe-

cially when the audience held their breath in awe at all the highly challenging and heart pumping tricks that the actors carried for a very appreciative audience.

The actors were profes-

sional, and it is hard to tell that they are all students halfway through their degree. Their skilful performances tell us how much time and effort have been invested to produce such a fantastic piece of work.

A quick peep into the world of theatre

By Clarice Lau

Scepticism is involved when evaluating the prospects of a career in theatre. Are the jobs in this industry stable? Does it provide good income and career security? Is it a career path you would encourage anyone passionate about theatre or the arts to pursue?

To gain more in-depth understandings about the theatre industry, Melbourne City News had a quick chat with

Robert Reid, a director who is currently doing his PhD, and simultaneously doing freelance playwrighting and game design. Robert generously shared with us his views and understandings of the industry he knows so well.

“Firstly, the industry is not directly affected by the economy or the amount of jobs available,” explained Reid. “Instead, the fact that theatre is a small industry with limited long-term, full-time opportunities does not mean that

chances are scant. It is a very vibrant freelance industry, especially for theatre makers who are usually self-funded or receive government support.”

Despite having a smaller and limited population in the industry, Reid is still hopeful about what theatre has to offer to audiences. Theatre provides an assortment of incredibly diverse cultures and experiences, creating a rich and vibrant industry, which in turn widens its appeal and audience base. The significance of theatre in Aus-

tralia should not be overlooked. “It is definitely very important to Melbourne”, says Robert. “Theatre has always been a place to discuss ideas and an important art form to explore who we are.” Reid believes that theatre is a fast way of generating response, and notes that it is collaborative because everyone works as a team, so no one is alone.

It is also an industry with high professionalism. “Most actors are highly skilled. The only possible incentive for young

actors to want to go overseas to hone their skills is only when a golden opportunity has been offered to them,” said Reid.

His involvement with Theatre Alive, an initiative of Arts Victoria that provides online information about what is showing in Melbourne, is proof of his enthusiasm. Reid supports the idea of Theatre Alive because it is inclusive by providing review forms and encourages feedback. “I have been in this industry for 15 years, and I have gained massive support



Robert Reid

over the years.” Though he has had a humble start, his persistence and passion have brought him to where he is now.



Photo: Garth Olander

James O'Hara, Paul Capsis and George Shevtsov

International dancer is back to take the stage at Malthouse

By Kate Tapping

When James O'Hara was eight his teacher introduced dance classes at the school. “I went home and told my parents I really wanted to learn more,” says James. “They weren't surprised as I was constantly dancing, but they were waiting for me to ask to take it further.”

It was the first step on a journey that has taken James from his hometown of Fremantle, Western Australia, across the globe – Geneva, Monaco, Paris, London, New York, Amsterdam, Barcelona – and ultimately back to Australia this month, for his first Australian shown since he

left when he was 17.

James is dancing in *Die Winterreise* (The Winter Journey), a work created by Matthew Lutton. The production also features renowned jazz pianist Alistair Spence and theatre veteran George Shevtsov, with choreography from Chrissie Parrott.

“Matt and I have been talking for a few years about doing something together,” says James. “We studied at the WAPA (Western Australian Performing Arts) at the same time, but never properly met. We met later through mutual friends and bonded over the fact we were both from Perth and both on our own journeys,

we connected because we were both so motivated.”

The idea of bringing together an eclectic group of performers, be they dancers, singers, acrobats or martial artists, is one that is always exciting says James, “All the performers are so admirable in their own different way, but then have a way of coming together and connecting.”

“The creation process for me was incredibly enriching, it was everything. It was daunting, it was exciting, it was challenging. It made me feel incredibly comfortable and at ease but it was also exhausting... yet I was never tired of been there. We were all so different but had a way of coming together and

connecting whilst remaining very uniquely ourselves.”

Coming back to Australia to work this year is a deliberate strategy by James whose desire to work in his home country is strong.

“I left when I was 17. My family is incredibly important to me and I miss them. I am still essentially very connected to Australia.”

It is also – theoretically – a chance to slow down from what has been a hectic eight years of rehearsing, performing, creating, teaching and touring around the world, says James, “Ironically it has been my most busiest year yet.”

Malthouse Theatre & ThinIce present

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— THE WINTER JOURNEY —

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 Conceived & Directed by **Matthew Lutton**
 Performed by **Paul Capsis, James O'Hara**
George Shevtsov, Alister Spence

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