

JUNE 2009

REVIEW

## ballet.magazine

*Ballet Central**Ballet Central 2009 Tour:*

*'Scottish Dances (from Flowers of the Forest)', 'When No One is Looking!', 'Ascent', '5 Lullabies', 'Scorpiones', 'Waltz from Facade', 'Brisk Singing', 'Whodunnit?'*

*April 2009*

*London, Linbury*

*by Bruce Marriott*



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I reviewed the opening night of this year's tour only a couple of months ago but even so it was great to catch a selection of the works again at the ROH Linbury - 6 stops into this year's 22-stop tour. Last time I tended to concentrate on the new works and this time I'll cover the whole show - if some of the words are similar, do forgive me.

At the Linbury we got a selection of 8 pieces from the 11 in this year's touring repertoire. In terms of span it was wonderfully diverse, from jazz/musical theatre to contemporary dance and from established classics to mini-drama and hip hop. And it's the hip hop piece, *Scorpiones* of Jonzi D, that remains my favourite - for such unexpected freshness, cheek and sass. It is a reminder that hip

hop's time on stage has truly come to the mainstream.

There was more traditional fare in the works of David Bintley, (*Scottish Dances from Flowers of the Forest*), Ashton (*Waltz from Facade*), and Christopher Gable (*5 Lullabies*), though the first two are fun turns on traditional steps. Bintley's ever-smiling Scottish steps to jaunty Malcolm Arnold tunes opened the night pleasantly well. Ashton's 4 bonbon girls in pink chiffon and satin bows look a million dollars but it's hard to catch the 30's style and if I had a small disappointment in the evening this was it. Christopher Gable, the much-loved Royal Ballet dancer and director of Northern Ballet theatre, died prematurely and *5 Lullabies* was his last work for the school he helped found. It's a really heartfelt



testament to children and young teenagers and amidst the fun of the evening a reminder that dance can communicate at a much deeper level. A piece as touching as ever.



Christopher Gable's *5 Lullabies*  
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Phillip Aiden's Sondheim-scored piece *When No One is Looking!* still looks terrific as mannequins, dressed rather fabulously in little black dresses, slowly come to life and strut their West End thing, big time. As he says in the programme "Have you ever looked at a mannequin and thought it moved?" and the answer is yes of course and it's the inspiration for a handsome piece here. Richard Alston's *Brisk Singing* to baroque selections from Rameau's opera *Les Boreades*, while totally different in style, is just as smilingly infectious - an exuberant and bounding romp, sold well. Mikaela Polley (the ex Rambert Dancer) also created a pacy number (*Ascent*) to a new piece of Philip Feeney that impressed again with its athletic and strongly sculptural look. And nice to see ballet and contemporary steps mixed well. Polley is one to watch.

The evening closed with Matthew Hart's *Whodunnit?*. This fun piece, based on the board game *Cluedo* has settled in very well and the audience much enjoyed its barmy action for the cast of nine dance-actors. In a strong team Diarmaid O'Meara (Reverend Green) and Stephanie Pasiou (the Maid) jumped out particularly for their sense of fun. It's been a while since I've seen a new piece by Hart and I hope he does more strongly dramatic things like this.





Matthew Hart's *Whodunnit?*  
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I make no apology for signing off as I did before:  
I think Ballet Central tour some of the best mixed bills in the land - don't be fooled  
by the school background - this is serious dance, strongly presented.

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