

Ideas fail to take off from the runway

CAROL Brown starts work from an unusually intellectual base. One of her concerns over the past few years has been space: how it is shaped, and how it shapes us.

For Nerve, she has reshaped The Place: all the seats have been removed, and instead of a standard auditorium, with the audience facing in one direction and performers in a rectangle at the end, we now have a construction by Stewart Dodd, a long green runway down the centre, gently hummocked in the middle, with a yellow-green shimmery gauze mesh hanging overhead. The

DANCE

Carol Brown

The Place, WC1

Judith Flanders

audience sits on the floor, or stands, down the sides of the landing-strip.

Rather awkwardly in this configuration, a video, *The Idea of the Sea*, is screened at the end of the space, showing various figures in isolation moving through a city, towards the sea that murmurs noisily throughout.

Nerve begins with Brown, a sultry presence, standing half in, half out of an unblinking light, moving only the top half of her body, reaching and bending into and out of the light, which, with her movements, seems to flicker like a strobe. Her partner, Grant McLay, lies prone at the other end of the performing area, and Brown gradually manipulates him through space.

Oddly, for someone who is so interested in space, she has limited herself with this runway — back and forth the performers roam, hemmed in by what should be liberating.

Brown's last piece, in St Pancras Chambers, was about loneliness and isolation. Here, she suggests that inside each city, as she shows on the film, private spaces are created. But her private moments remain private. Despite her formidable stage presence, the work remains resolutely technical — feelings and emotions are locked within the performers, and leave the audience sitting along the runway in the dark.

● *Until 2 October. Box office: 020 7387 0031.*

More reviews on page 46