

NOVEMBER 2002

REVIEW

## ballet magazine

*Carol Brown Dances &  
Inbal Pinto Dance Company**Carol Brown: 'Nerve',  
'The idea of the Sea',  
Inbal Pinto: 'Oyster'**October 2002  
London, Place & Bloomsbury Theatre**by Bruce Marriott*[Carol Brown 'Nerve' reviews](#)[Inbal Pinto 'Oyster' reviews](#)[Brown in reviews](#)[more Carol Brown reviews](#)[recent Inbal Pinto reviews](#)[more Bruce Marriott reviews](#)

The great thing about Dance Umbrella seasons is the variety and the challenge it presents to your prejudices. I read the universally upbeat words about programmes but ultimately swallow hard and just go when I can... and often as not gather some

rewarding experiences. I suppose its part of my dance-goer growing up but its also nice to be near the action in smaller theatres and of course Covent Garden has got narrower in its range of performances and much more expensive too. Enough - last week I had two Umbrella experiences as different as different could be.

First up was Carol Brown Dances at the Place in a bill sold as exploring the city and the body. The dancing part of the evening - a piece called 'Nerve' - took place on an asphalt track with the audience sat on the floor, or standing, either side. Flat at each end, the track became bumpy in the middle and cleverly spotlit at odd angles and with a distorted wire mesh above. Not a city of dreams but a city of reality.

The piece started in darkness with Brown under narrow slit lights, arms thrashing around as if a demented helicopter, accompanied by loud rolling thunder. Mesmerising in its madness and all rush on the senses. Down the other end of the track was Grant McLay lying asleep. Brown finds him and the two dreamily dance - she wide awake he in a floppy stupor. The movement is powerful, but careful and intimate. McLay awakens and they

dance more conventionally and yet still physically together and often using the twisted track for effect, leaning at impossibly odd angles on one another - human girders propping up each other and a mad city. The physicality takes its toll and they lay exhausted at times before exploring their world one more.

I was absorbed for much of the 37 minutes of its run, mainly by the different movement style - not so much dance as rather dance as physical and mechanical effort using bodies. There is a detachment there, but I don't think I got many insights into the city. The evening started with a 13 minute black and white film called 'The idea of the Sea' and showed blurry, shaky images of city car parks, suburban malls and an esplanade that your young spotty brother would be embarrassed of taking. This was deeply into Tate, Pile of Bricks, territory and you should see Carol Brown for her choreography not the videos she puts on.

Inbal Pinto Dance Company (at the Bloomsbury) hail from Israel and thoughts on the position of the Palestinians and political correctness flickered. But what, I thought, of seeing NYCB and the Kirov and Bolshoi all from regimes that do things I totally deplore at one time or another? As I mused on the complexities of world politics and dance, Oyster started and proved the perfect antidote.

Within seconds you enter a wondrous magical world of innocence and fun where the smartest missile might be a toy bow and arrow with a large rubber sucker on the end.

This is pure, inventive theatre in which the performers all appear as white-faced marionettes or models with childlike emotions who see magic in each other and their harebrained Heath Robinson world (\*). A world where two men inhabit a bell-tent of a raincoat (all mod-cons) one on the upper storey and one on the lower (truly) and where a ballerina has a stool strapped to her bum because its just so convenient for the rapid sitting.

I haven't fallen for a performance like this since Cirque Eloize and there is circus tradition here too including flying girls. But to say more would rob you of your own fun to come when you see them.

The Bloomsbury audience of kids, mums, dads and umbrella groupies lapped it up - you can't criticise theatre that is so uplifting. Work like this satisfies the big kid in all of us.

**\* If you don't know **Heath Robinson** these may prove delightful...**

[A typical HR cartoon](#)

['A convenient magnetic contraption \(with mirror attachment\) for reducing the figure'](#)

[Listing of many Cartoons](#)

[Heath Robinson biography site](#)

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