

*Alistair Appleton*

Do Buddhists Watch Telly?

After a middlingly interesting Gestalt workshop on ‘the moving body’, I went with Will to see some real moving bodies in my friend’s Theo’s dance piece at the Place.

photograph by Chris Nash



They were very strict on the door. You had to check your coats. Absolutely no entry once the piece had started – which was annoying since Will and I had got the time wrong and were rush rush rushing. But it was worth the rush.

Once inside the black space of the Place, all the wooden chairs were arranged in a circle and we were seated by the dancers.

I can usually gauge the success of a piece if I have fallen in love with at least one of the performers by the end of the show. I quickly fell in love with all four of them.

I had a headstart with lovely Theo, whose husband Ben Wright conceived and choreographed the piece, since I know him from other dancers. And the beautiful Delphine Gaborit had also worked with my friend raf many years ago. But the other two performers – Keir Patrick and Anna Larsen – were equally endearing.

It’s a testament to this troupe that they can act as well as they can dance. The piece is very much in the tradition of Pina Bausch’s *tanztheater* with a lot of spoken word and kooky exchanges scattered between beautiful dance. In fact, the piece reminded me of all the things I love about pina (without the repetition and bittiness that I started to see in the last

piece of hers I saw in Edinburgh...) Being danced up-close and personal (and we were asked to dance too at one stage) it was all about the four performers as friends, engaging in real movement in front of real audience members.

And it was also an example of the 'post-ironic' arts world that I commented on when I wrote about [mumford and sons](#). British performance and culture seems to have finally shaken off that crippling rictus of irony that spoilt it for so long. It is now acceptable to talk about death and love and friendship and loss without having to crepe it in black irony.

The dance was really about four people passing through life, getting old, loving, having fun and losing one another.

There was an exquisite scene where the circular stage was split with a narrow beam of light, which filled with dry ice, seemed like a partition wall. In the context of the dance on either side it was obviously an image of the transit from death to life, with those left behind on one side and the departed vanishing into the darkness on the other. It was an obvious image but that didn't make it a jot less moving.

Similarly: the dreamy image of friends lying in pools of greeny starlight and one of them recalling a note his grandfather carried from his grandmother: "There's something in us that can be without all of us and can carry on after us."

These things could be sentimental and mawkish in the wrong hands but they simply weren't. You don't need bleak irony to avoid mawkishness – you need the confidence that human beings relating and loving one another will always be interesting.

And loveable dancers, of course.
