

Inter Vivos

Grand, Swansea

May 5, then touring until June 14

Choreography: Didy Veldman,
Robert Cohan, Darsan Singh Bhuller

Producer: Phoenix Dance Theatre

Running time: 1hr 15mins

In contemporary dance circles, Phoenix Dance Theatre – helmed by artistic director Darsan Singh Bhuller – is renowned not only for its diversity but also for its unerring ability to capture the imagination of those to whom the genre might otherwise seem challenging and difficult.

This thrilling and totally absorbing triple bill comprises works that differ wildly from each other and which serve to demonstrate the extremes to which the vocabulary of dance can be stretched in the hands of those whose passion and energy enable them to establish an immediate rapport with the audience.

See *Through Blue*, by Didy Veldman, was a sensuous piece inspired by the parallels between life underwater and life in the womb, exploiting the elasticity of Stijn Celis' costume design to the full and set against a musical backdrop by composer Alfred Schnittke.

Robert Cohan's *Forest*, first performed in 1977 and

enlivened by a phenomenal soundscape created by Brian Hodgson – the man responsible for the voices of the Daleks in the original series of *Doctor Who* – was initially created as a series of studies performed in total silence, using only the breath of the dancers as a means of establishing rhythm and timing.

It is a device which has subsequently been much imitated but here it packs a real punch and the beauty of the piece is breathtaking.

Darsan Singh Bhuller's *Eng-er-land* is by far the most accessible and easily appreciated of the three works and also elicits more than a few hearty belly laughs as the dancers teeter, weave, squat and retch their way through a wild night out in an urban townscape, which could be anywhere in Britain. The settings in which the action takes place – clubs, cafes, pub toilets, curry houses and the street itself – are created entirely by projections and video effects, as important a part of the work as the movements and characterisations of the dancers themselves.

This is instantly recognizable, remarkably clever stuff with which a predominantly young audience can readily identify. Anyone seeking an introduction to the world of contemporary dance would do well to seek out this company and treat themselves to an evening of movement at its most exhilarating and thought-provoking.

Graham Williams