

There are a few problems. Richard Alan Holmes' Despard Murgatroyd seems battle-weary, David Wannan's Roderic wan. Incessantly arch attitudes and platitudes threaten to cloy. Mugging tends to be excessive. Although the programme cites Edward Gorey as a primary scenic influence, the amateurish décors hardly reflect his macabre spirit. Ergo, modified rapture. In context, however, it almost doesn't matter, matter, matter... ★★★★★

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DANCE

Whim W'Him

On the Boards, Seattle

In September, when Olivier Wevers announced the details of his new company Whim W'Him, he lit a fuse of excitement that has burned steadily in the Seattle dance community ever since. Why the furore? This Belgian has been a favourite principal dancer at Pacific Northwest Ballet for 12 years. His choreography often ranks among the best in local dance festivals. And in building his company, Wevers chose ace dancers from both the classical and the contemporary

**Chalnessa Eames
and Lucien
Postlewaite of
Whim W'Him**

Marc von Borstel

communities. Whim W'Him's Friday debut lived up to expectations. The evening opened with Wevers' *X stasis* (2006) and *Fragments* (2007). These are worthy works, but it was only with Wevers' new *3Seasons* that the benefits of his having his own company became apparent. Unconstrained by a commissioning company's schedule, dancers or audience, Wevers achieved a polished, 45-minute work of intricacy and innovation.

Here, Wevers asks ballet and modern dance to work together. He shakes off the symmetry of ballet, allowing each side of the body to dance differently. He begs the back for extreme mobility. Hands dance, too. He uses both floor and air. He chooses transition over pose. Mood trumps movement, but movements are nonetheless precise. Whim W'Him's dancers – Ty Alexander Cheng, Chalnessa Eames, Jim Kent, Hannah Lagerway, Kylie Lewallen, Vincent Lopez, Kaori Nakamura, Jonathan Porretta, and Lucien Postlewaite – ably negotiated Wevers' style, their personalities adding to the work's rich texture.

3Seasons depicts our disposable society. It starts with Nakamura screwing in a light bulb. It ends with her (representing humanity) dumped headfirst in a dustbin, feet up in the air, tutu hanging just over the edge. In between we see acquisition, community, vanity, love, lust, rape, breast implants, self-destruction... Wevers avoids preachiness, delivering instead a well-paced drama with dashes of wit.

The piece is choreographed to Vivaldi's *Four Seasons*, but each night one season is replaced with music by Byron Au Yong. Wevers says this speaks to climate change and our need to adapt. The dancers adapt to musical uncertainty as best they can, and the reimagined season assumes an eerie, fantastical quality. ★★★★★

Rosie Gaynor

