

Dancing Partners - Triple Bill (Tour - Blackpool)

Robin Duke is enthralled by the power of dance

By Robin Duke • 19 Mar 2014 • Northwest

WOS Rating: ★★★★★



Company Chameleon

Three into one isn't always the guarantee of success – especially in the world of dance. But thankfully *Dancing Partners*, a cross border dance initiative coming together to promote collaboration and establish accessible, visual and dynamic dance to the widest possible audience, succeeds remarkably well.

On paper, the three companies do not appear to have too much in common. Thomas Noone Dance Company hail from Barcelona, Company Chameleon originate from the earthier surrounds of Salford in Greater Manchester, and Norrdans originate from Sweden.

On stage they could easily be parts of the same whole – partly thanks to Thomas Noone also choreographing the Norrdans contribution to this latest addition to Blackpool Grand Theatre's ever more exciting and boundary breaking dance season.

The evening – total running time 1hr 45 mins – started as the original programme information had led the audience to believe it would end. Confusing for some, but not insurmountable.

Brutal Love Poems by the Thomas Noone Dance Company is as raw and dynamic as it promises to be. Opening with a Spartan and ominous soundtrack, it evolved into drum 'n' bass, segued into tremelo guitar, through whispers and groans before climaxing with an atonal thrash. The choreography clearly explores the animal we conceal inside us; two couples clash and struggle, ebb and flow, love and hate, possess and control each other with brutality and violence never far from the surface, even in the most flowing of slow motion moments.

Company Chameleon's *Push* has evolved from a conversation that began in childhood between company founders Anthony Missen and Kevin Edward Turner. Performed as a duet, it is an exploration on the quality of touch (when *Push* comes to shove and beyond?). The dancers veer between a puppet master's control over his dummy and the physicality of two well-choreographed friends on a drunken night out together. In either case, each depends on the other's presence.

The work has been co-commissioned by Withuot Walls and Dance Initiative Greater Manchester. For *Beautiful Beast* by Norrdans, choreographer Noone has incorporated live on stage the evocative music of Gjallahorn, a four piece world music group established 20 years ago with roots in the folk music of Finland and Sweden. On first hearing them, he says he was "taken to a mythical world at once very old and also timeless, ancient and contemporary and so wanted to create my own atemporal tale through dance to complement their soundscape."

He has certainly created something quite primal and pagan in its physicality – including an alarmingly raw modern pas de deux and using his company of eight excellent dancers to fuse and flow perfectly with the live musicians they become one entity, almost the "fabulous animal" of his dream, certainly the *Beautiful Beast* of the title.

And it's not an insult to say there are times when he almost creates a thinking dance fan's Scandinavian *Riverdance*