

Bonachela bravado

THERE'S no denying Rafael Bonachela's *The Land Of Yes* and *The Land Of No* is extraordinarily beautiful.

The Sydney Dance Company artistic director's work is rarely anything but resplendent in its energy, particularly when he uses his choreographic prowess to depict the absurdities of life.

This production, first performed in 2009 in London, was inspired by an absurdity that's fascinated Bonachela for decades: signs, and the ways that we choose to interpret them.

It starts with promise: Charmene Yap's opening solo is danced with such vigour that you fear she may pop out of her skin. As she caresses her limbs, her eyes focus on distant objects that cause her body to jolt violently in sharp arcs across the floor. Her frustration is palpable.

The other memorable sequence is a gamesome duo that sees Natalie Allen and Chen Wen

play off against each other in a series of coltish movements and coquettish glances. They are testing each other and themselves and the audience laughs appreciatively at being let in on the game.

Unfortunately, this is when the connection between dancers and audience weakens. Bonachela is vocal about not "signposting" his works — he prefers them to remain open, like poems — but it's hard to interpret poetry when the words are few. There are jaw-dropping feats of physicality but it's unfortunate that, in this case, style trumps substance.

Vanessa Keys

Sydney Theatre, Walsh Bay; until October 29, \$40-\$75, 9250 1999, sydneytheatre.org.au

REVIEW

The Land Of Yes
& The Land Of No
Sydney Theatre



Visionary: A stunning opening solo by Charmene Yap **Picture:** Wendell Teodoro