

The Australian

Review: Alas, at the Lyric Theatre

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Alas ... Nach Duato's latest work at the Sydney Festival is a beautiful exploration of love, immortality and loneliness.

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NACHO Duato's work Alas (Wings) is a dramatic exploration of humankind's need to feel alive through experiencing emotional, sensual and spiritual needs.

In his return to the stage, Duato plays the role of Damiel, an angel who craves becoming mortal again after years of loneliness in the afterlife.

The highly-acclaimed Spanish choreographer/dancer introduces himself to us after climbing down a tall, illuminated, frosted-glass-like tower in the middle of the stage.

As he descends, Duato and his audience become voyeurs, watching couples intimately convey their love through a range of classical ballet and contemporary dance steps.

Traditional high kicks with pointed toes and plies are common motifs, as fingers spread across arms, necks and the pelvis, before more modern moves emerge.

As dancers embrace, they bend in to plies, push their knees forward and race towards us on their tippy-toes which increases the works intensity.

Their bent knees are reminiscent of the tribal Haka dance that was originally based on a man's primal instinct and a woman's sexuality.

We hear sharp, sad violin as Duato speaks to us in his native Spanish and his words are translated in surtitles.

He reveals he has lost himself, and wants to become human again to connect with his roots.

In several dance movements, Duato appears, disappears and lies in the foetal position on stage, until the spotlight

shines on him and he speaks to us again.

In re-discovering his humanity, he takes off his jacket to bare his human flesh.

He then slowly sheds his immortality through different dances including one where Duato's stage turns in to a scene from a nightclub.

Dancers appear in tight leather boots and hotpants, feathers and fishnet tops, men dance in skirts - and theres even a cheeky bum flash - against the backdrop of loud rock music.

Duato then shows how he can love by seducing a woman, before we see him finally cleansed by rain that only falls on top of him.

His dancers then glide and move across the stage, making graceful splashes as Duato generously dances for us by rolling and twisting about in the pools of water.

By the end, Duato appears free, like a bird with wings of his own that will take him in to the next chapter of his life journey.

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