

AND IN FEDERATION SQUARE

Square dancing becomes avant garde amid the trees

DANCE MERCÉ CUNNINGHAM DANCE COMPANY: THE MELBOURNE EVENT

Melbourne International Arts Festival
Federation Square, October 21.
www.melbournifestival.com.au
Hilary Crompton Reviewer

IF THERE is one thing predictable about Melbourne's weather, it is its unpredictability.

Having drowned out the Melbourne Festival's opening night concert in Federation Square, it turned on mid-summer temperatures for Merce

Cunningham's Melbourne Event, which is perhaps appropriate. After all, a central principle of Cunningham's choreography has been to avoid predictability.

He ensures that his choreography never looks the same on consecutive nights. He embraces the serendipitous intrusions of passing crowds or environmental influences.

The balance of avant-garde architecture and the natural surrounds of river, gum trees and sky were a perfect frame for the action. Random occurrences intersected the formal geometry

of Cunningham's choreography. A small child wandered happily, her orange and pink balloons floating past dancers in red and orange, as if an intentional part of the design.

Helicopters whirred overhead, their blades complementing the live accompaniment, a combination of acoustic and electronically generated sounds.

Cunningham's choreography is an exercise in design, employing the amazingly malleable geometry of the human body to its fullest.

His dancers move with exquisite precision, giving due

attention to every angle and curve. Limbs intersect. Bodies overlap in perfectly balanced oblique lines, making one freshly aware of the geometric facades of the surrounding buildings.

This is dance that deliberately avoids emotion. There is no hint of drama or narrative.

Cunningham has been breaking new ground since the 1950s, though for many in the crowd this was their first encounter with his work. And at the end of the performance, the chatter indicated he had found new fans.



Merce Cunningham's choreography using "the malleable geometry of the human body" yesterday.

PICTURE: SIMON SCHLUTER