

***Standing Stones* – Choreographed by Jacky Lansley**

Review extracts

“Cathedrals are very theatrical buildings: pews suggest auditorium seating, voluminous interiors are designed to awe and inspire, windows tell stories, and patterns of vaults and columns evoke harmonies and rhythms. The form itself is a kind of performance. Choreographer Jacky Lansley has clearly recognised as much with her work *Standing Stones*, for Leeds-based company Ascendance Rep. Set to Mozart’s lovely Clarinet Quintet, played live in an arrangement for clarinet and piano, it begins and ends with four dancers in upright poses, like mute pillars which the choreography brings temporarily to life. Dressed in vivid primary colours, at first they seem simply to echo the architecture: arching trunk bends, long arabesques that indicate the compass directions of transept and nave, building-block phrases that solidify into friezes. In the second section they are more humanised, cupping a hand to a listening ear, or taking careful steps over the stone floor as if looking for a place to belong. One dancer, an individual set against icons, will take the foreground as the others clump in formations behind.

The third section takes an unexpectedly earthy turn. The dancers don medieval headwear and stroll down the aisle, eyeballing the audience with gargoyle grimaces. Here, framed against a vivid stained-glass window, the intense colours of their costumes seem apt rather than out of place. One woman re-enters the nave on stilts, dressed in capacious robes like a giant winged effigy, with an apron full of apples. The others twist her skirts into maypole ribbons.”

Sanjoy Roy for The Guardian

“Choreographer Jacky Lansley has a lightness of touch embracing a depth of meaning and her faithful exploration of each cathedral for inspiration is apparent throughout. Beginning and ending with the dancers framed in a beautifully lit still moment, referencing a stained glass window and the medieval stone carvings, the dance is a moving feast laden with imagery.

Her approach maintains the natural theatre of the cathedral with the audience as the congregation, facing east towards the stage at the top of the nave. Dancers, Daniella Ferreira, Ayano Honda, Katie Keeble and Paul Wilkinson, perform with grace and versatility, considerable acting ability, and playful energy. There are unexpected moments and surprises, such as one of the dancers, Katie Keeble, emerging on stilts in a fantastic costume used to full effect by all the dancers in a swirling frenzy of fun and excitement. The piece drew spontaneous and appreciative applause at special moments. The music uses the four movements of Mozart Clarinet Quintet K581 played by members of the Cornish Sinfonia, clarinetist David White and pianists Jonathan Delbridge and Edward Enrico Gerber who share the role. It is guaranteed to remain with you long after the final note has faded. The costumes, by Emma Hopkinson and Jacky Lansley, are in brilliant contrast to the ancient grey stone walls, highlighted by the quality of the lighting designed by Michael Mannion. In the darker cathedrals, the lighting creates large shadowy figures emphasising the atmosphere.

Standing Stones is an exceptional dance piece weaving many threads in a performance which lifts the spirit in a joyous and celebratory way. It is a tribute to the choreographer, dancers and musicians that they capture the spirit of each space making it a memorable journey which deserves to be seen by much bigger audiences.”

Tricia Keeble