

Fine blend of music and dance

THE years of improvisational practice between dancer Ros Warby and cellist Helen Mountfort bore fruit in the collaborative *Enso*.

Joined by vocalist Jeannie Van de Velde, the women present a trio that taps their individual media within an uncluttered, effective structure.

The restrained interaction between performers occurs across the cavernous space of Wesleyan Hall. Mountfort and Van de Velde stay seated while Warby weaves herself through the deep space.

The improvisation of *Enso* allows each artist to control her own instrument and mediate between being an individual voice and part of a greater whole.

Synchronous moments exist within the triadic arrangement, but all artists contribute uniquely to the abstract product.

Within her medium, each exploits a gamut of expressive possibilities. Mountfort plucks and taps her strings.

She plays melodically and atonally.

Van de Velde works through a range of vocalisations while Warby changes tempo and isolates body parts.

The continually shifting relationships and

REVIEW

dance

Enso

Presenters: Ros Warby and Danceworks

Where and when: The Wesleyan Hall, Albert Park, until April 5

Reviewer: Stephanie Glickman

focuses between performers and the ambiguous content of *Enso* yield no logical progression or clear storyline.

Mountfort clearly echoes Warby's movements with her cello during one section. Later Van de Velde layers her voice over the cello.

Intriguing improvisation sustains itself with climactic moments created by varied timings.

Luckily, all three performers demonstrate keen senses of phrase-building which manifests rhythmically idiosyncratic moments interspersed with ripe pauses.

The careful layering of these phrases produces

a controlled, almost meditative conversation between the trio.

Ben Cobham's simple design concept for *Enso* emphasises the moments of stillness and detail in the work.

A small, powerful light shows Warby's initial movement — a subtle rotation of her hand, while a trapezoidal hole in the floor accentuates the hollow feel of the performance space.

Using her sinuous body, Warby sculpts her long limbs asymmetrically around her strongly centred torso and intuitively combines tense and released actions.

This visual paradox of simultaneously being rigid and loose offers compelling images as well as exemplifying Warby's mastery and manipulation of movement.

Her fluid performance blurs the distinction between improvisation and set choreography, creating cohesive, engaging dance.

The abrupt ending of *Enso* jolts us out of a 45-minute reverie. Having only begun to ease into the piece and absorb its ambiguous suggestions, we are left craving more of *Enso*'s fertile images and pregnant sounds.

HOVERING PRESENCE

ENSO
Danceworks
Wesleyan Hall, Albert Park
Melbourne
March/April

Combining three distinctive talents in Danceworks' womb-like space, *Enso* demonstrates the virtue of waiting to see promising artists grow into their maturity. Dancer-choreographer Ros Warby, cellist-composer Helen Mountfort and opera singer Jeannie Van de Velde's collaboration makes *Enso*, an interdependent, 40-minute improvisation, a fine example of experience delivering the goods. (Warby and Mountfort's shared practice goes back eight years.) Each performer seems to dig into her soul to expose something vital and private, but with none of the emotive non sequiturs often evident in more youthful work.

Small fragments – a repeated cello tone or phrase, here dry, there lush, quiet humming or an explosion of vocal power thrown gloriously into the reverberant space – are the inspiration for and counterpoint to Warby's movement. And what movement it is. Lithe in action, lean in texture, it seems rooted way down in Warby's body, as if below her hips so that even they swing in space with the same astonishing lightness that her liquid arms do as they frame her head or a space in front of her, or cradle some immensely heavy air overhead. But these are only static moments in a graduated seam of invention which whips through space, but slowly, hovers intently, but calmly. Shifting her weight, balancing on her haunches with a timeless tension, or swooping like a bird of prey, without ever lifting her feet, you want her to stop so you can recall what you see, even when she is already still. When she leaves the space to Mountfort or Van de Velde's impressive solo and combined effects, Warby's presence hovers.

Ben Cobham and Simon Barley's sparingly lit design — a half-circle curtain enfolding the audience, a trap-door and a white reflector dish suspended overhead — generates intimacy without encroaching on the viewer's personal space, making one feel equally outside and inside the performance. One feels privileged to have

observed such authenticity. In this already busy year of contemporary dance, *Enso* has set a standard that will be hard to match.

—Lee Christofis