

White Christmas at the Place

White Christmas: 'The Overhead Project', 'Corpus', 'In the Doorway',
'Spectre', '4:Freeze Frame'

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They have been packing audiences in like three-penny bits in a pudding for the last two weeks at The Place's Robin Howard Dance Theatre. The White Christmas season featured evenings of short lite bite pieces presented in a white painted space designed to strip away all distractions - as if dancers are not vulnerable enough. And to prove the point last Monday in The Overhead Project, dancer Raquel Mesequer opened the programme pinned to the theatre's back wall with scruffy tutu and jangling nerves. A dancer's maelstrom of panic waiting in the wings is scripted by Ben Duke and projected overhead. "I need to p**, throw up, run away." "I need a proper job... I can't remember how it starts." After the ordeal and the canned applause rings out, the prostrate performer delivers her own verdict, "Damn I'm good."

Corpus by StopGAP, a company of four with and without disabilities, featured Laura Jones in a wheelchair. Occasionally partnered by the likeable Dan Watson, Jones's involvement in the choreography was a deeply felt affirmation of the power of dance. Sarah Fahie's two contributions, In the Doorway and Spectre, were not. Fahie shamelessly uses sound tracks of songs by Ravel and Berlioz, sung and played to heart stopping artistic excellence, to reflect their glory on her parasitical, crude and unformed steps. A disgraceful sham.

But veteran David Hughes showed his three colleagues how to do it in Rafael Bonachela's (4:Freeze Frame). To thumping rythms by Throbbing Gristle, Hughes's liquid freedom of movement captures Bonachela's fearless relish of the savage, repetitive beat. Most modern dance makers would benefit from a close study of his ability to convert music's irresistible thrust into an ebb and flow of passionate relationships. Infuriating and thrilling, The Place knows how to assemble an engaging programme. Already it looks like a prosperous New Year in Euston.