



Written and directed by DANIELE FINZI PASCA

The Age
Melbourne, Australia
August 9, 2006

Body reign supreme

By Cameron Woodhead

CIRCUS REVIEW: RAIN Cirque Eloize, Palms at Crown, until August 27. Running time: 110 minutes

FOR some time, circus has been shifting away from the tradition of P.T. Barnum with its big tops and sawdust, its ringmasters, freaks and animals. One strand has allied itself with physical theatre and contemporary dance, seeking to humanise the art of circus and evade the reductiveness of pure spectacle by delivering its stunts in a wider dramatic context.

Perhaps the finest exponents of this form come from Canada - think Cirque du Soleil - and Cirque Eloize is among the best of the best. Rain is expressive circus: it attains an emotive power no less arresting than its visually triumphant acrobatics.

Director Daniele Finzi Pasca reportedly located the central idea for the show in his own childhood memories. Rain contains a series of vignettes: some vague and fractured; some vivid and detailed; all pregnant with the peculiar nostalgia of half-remembered innocence and the wistful hope it inspires.

The sheer variety of stunts is astounding. There's static trapeze, teeter board, Russian bar, aerial hoops, strong acrobatics and juggling, as well as banquine (acrobatics performed without mechanical apparatus).

But there are still more breathtaking moments: a stunning "tissue" routine performed by five acrobats suspended from black fabric; the awesome strength and grace of Jacek Wyskup and Bartek Mankau in their hand-to-hand number; and the novel Roue Cyr (Krin Haglund and Jonas Woolverton), a dizzying display performed inside gigantic revolving hula hoops. In the show's climax, the stage is flooded by water, with rain descending in a visual epiphany.

Rain is accomplished circus and theatre. There are tricks galore, but the spectacular physicality of the performers is bent towards something more profound - a whimsical and moving journey through the topography of the human mind.