

# A seamless look back at history

## **Sapling to Silver** by Mirramu Dance Company

The Street Theatre, May 13-15

Reviewer: **Michelle Potter**

**S**hortly after the opening section of *Sapling to Silver*, Elizabeth Cameron Dalman, artistic director of Mirramu Dance Company, made her appearance on stage. At 70, dressed in black pants and loose jacket that sparkled elegantly under the stage lights, she looked stunning. Picking up a red feather that had been dropped from the flies Dalman told us that *Sapling to Silver* was the story of a vibrant life – her own life in dance.

The work was in 16 short sections. Choreographically it looked back to the 1960s and 1970s when Dalman's mentors were at their most productive, and to the popular music and dance styles of the era. But what characterised the show and stopped it from becoming an act of self-indulgence was the sheer quality of the dancing and production.

Standout dancers were, for me, Miranda When and Albert David, both of whom commanded the stage with their physical presence. Both were able to convince us through movement that they were elderly in the section "Old Company" or young and hip as in "Dance Party". When's "Firebird" was a perfect opener and showed off her sassy, easy style of moving.

Dalman herself often acted as a narrator, couching the narrative of her life in a story she had written about a eucalypt that had grown from a sapling into a mature tree and had then "disappeared". While I occasionally felt uncomfortable with this meta-



Mirramu Dance Company artistic director Elizabeth Cameron Dalman.

phor, it nevertheless had a kind of hippy aura to it that allowed it to sit comfortably within the mood of the piece. Unexpectedly, the strongest moment of dance in the piece came with the tree story. In the section called "Tree Spirit" Dalman and David performed a duet – she with her frail frame, white, wispy hair and a contained Western vocabulary, he with his very different indigenous dance heritage, his powerful upper body and piercing eyes.

With its seamless transitions between sections; its sound track created by Andreas Dalman that moved effortlessly from Igor Stravinsky to Janis Joplin, Peter, Paul and Mary to Carl Vine; its lighting by Rodney Bates; its costumes skilfully made by Sharon Rasker; and its slow and considered curtain calls, *Sapling to Silver* was a carefully produced show. Bouquets to Dalman for a brave and beautiful work.