



DIVERSE: Andrew Kylian and Lana Jones performing in *Monument*, above, with Daniel Gaudiello, Vivienne Wong, Jake Mangakahia and Ella Havelka, below.

Photos: Branco Gaica

Monument to collaboration

The Australian Ballet's much-anticipated return to Canberra with a full, main-stage show was a triumph.

The world premiere of Garry Stewart's *Monument*, referencing the architecture of Parliament House, was the must-see item on the program, although this beautifully conceived work shared the evening with George Balanchine's *The Four Temperaments* and Christopher Wheeldon's pas de deux from *After the Rain*.

The three works made up a program that showed contemporary ballet at its most diverse and stylish.

Monument, which closed the program, is a rare example of a collaboration in which the sum of the creative elements is greater than the individual parts, although each part is a gem.

Stewart's highly physical approach to choreography used the technical skills of the Australian Ballet's dancers to maximum advantage, while building up a series of powerful images of architectural process.

Mary Moore's white and black, body-hugging costumes showed off

Symmetries. The Australian Ballet

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the clean lines of the choreography but were fresh in design.

Jon Buswell's lighting, with its bright, white geometric patches of light, which gave way at times to shadows, was strong and clean.

Huey Benjamin's electronic score was surprisingly delicate at times with an almost spiritual and certainly humanistic quality as it moved from percussion to a Tibetan chant.

The performance took place against projected, 3D computer-generated graphics by Paul Lawrence-Jennings. These fascinating animations linked the work back to the specific architecture of Parliament House. Quite simply, *Monument* is a collaborative tour de force.

The Four Temperaments, first on the program, was made in 1946 and continues to belie its age.

It is, for me, essentially an abstract



ballet, despite its name, and despite the Australian Ballet's carefully nuanced and personalised performance. It continues to surprise each time. In many respects it, too, looks at architecture – the architecture of

the structure and vocabulary of classical ballet, which Balanchine dissects throughout the work. *The Four Temperaments* made a perfect opener for this program.

Between *The Four Temperaments*

and *Monument* was the brief and beautiful pas de deux from *After the Rain*. Lana Jones, as Canberra's own star, was ecstatically received, and deservedly so, for her performance with Adam Bull in this work. Jones' sculptural qualities as a dancer were clearly evident in one of the most affecting works in the current ballet repertoire.

It was touching too to see Bull, whose performance was so in tune with that of his partner, generously acknowledge as the applause rang out that it was Jones' night.

It was a real pleasure to see the Australian Ballet back in Canberra in a program that suited the limitations of the Canberra stage. None of the works had a huge cast and none required the stage to be cluttered with sets and props.

The beautifully curated program showed the sculptural beauty of contemporary ballet and its capacity to adapt to new ways of moving and new ways of interacting with developments in the sister arts.

The theatre was filled to overflowing for this Centenary of Canberra production.