

## Dance review: An amorphous, pulsing live show by Frontier Danceland



Dancers' Locker - Elemental Beings presented by Frontier Danceland. PHOTO: BERNIE NG

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### Dancers' Locker - Elemental Beings

Frontier Danceland

Aliwal Arts Centre Multi-Purpose Hall, June 5, 2pm

If dance companies want to continue performing work to a live audience during the heightened alert, adjustments must be made.

Frontier Danceland's four dancer-choreographers do just that here, presenting eight performances over three days to audiences of at most 10 people.

White Zentai suits completely cover the four of them from head to toe and cleverly hide the masks mandated by the new restrictions.

The choice of venue - the concrete floor of Aliwal Arts Centre's multi-purpose hall - is a departure from earlier performances, which were held in the company's own studio at Goodman Arts Centre, with the exception of last year's online version.

The audience sits on evenly distanced pillows before a landscape of irregular structures made of white boxes, some heaped in piles. A lone tower of boxes is stacked high to the left and loose boxes are scattered along the sides of the room.

Dimming lights flicker across the odd shapes, their pulsing glow giving life to the cold space.

At some point, I become aware of lights behind me. I turn to see the shadowy projection of a constantly evolving amorphous mass.

Arms make themselves visible. Pointed feet reach out; two heads try to pull away from each other.

As the space gradually illuminates, the dancers emerge from the front of the room. A white figure appears from behind the pile of boxes; another bursts through a cardboard lid. Two dancers lope forward, constantly stuck shoulder to shoulder or head to head; another pair are tied together by string, arm to arm and foot to foot.



Dimming lights flicker across the odd shapes, their pulsing glow giving life to the cold space. PHOTO: BERNIE NG

As the rhythm of the music picks up, the dancers come together in an elated huddle of undulating bodies and waving arms, pleading, worshipping and imploring.

They move in pairs to flank the audience on either side of the room, the movements keeping them connected. They feed off each other's energy and the audience's gaze.

The full-length work of 40 minutes differs from previous editions of Dancers' Locker, where each piece would usually be choreographed by a single company dancer.

While this joint choreography develops the creative abilities of the company as a whole, the trade-off is the clarity and precision in movement execution that the dancers have shown themselves capable of in works by guest choreographers.

As the performance ends, the dancers fade away or crawl back into boxes. One pushes the tallest tower of boxes towards the other boxes and curls up around it.

The thought put into crafting the overall environment of the performance justifies the need to experience it live.

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