

Tempo dance festival far from routine

by Marcus Stickley

Ballroom grace sashayed alongside sultry latin extravagance at this month's Tempo dance festival.

The country's top amateur dancers performed in the Dancesport showcase at the Auckland festival.

Dancers came in all shapes, sizes and ages. Everyone had their match.

Each of the twelve items at the showcase was performed to a story by the dancers, who train five or six times a week to reach a competitive level.

Dances ranged from a cyberpunk Westside story with gangs decked out in fluorescent pink and green, to the traditional elegance of the ballroom.

Backstage dancers pulled on their begged and borrowed costumes. Many had found out only that day they had to supply their own.

One dancer nursed a bruised head with an ice pack after she collided with another dancer while shuttling off stage in the dark.

Younger performers did not let a hectic schedule get in the way of shenanigans.

The boys launched themselves into a slide across the polished floor while the girls

preened themselves before the wall of mirrors.

A jail house rock wrapped up the evening, and the audience escaped out of the steamy theatre.

New Zealand Dancesport Association choreographer Laura Wells said the showcase was excellent.

She had total faith in her dancers.

"They are performers. That is what they are here to do."

"We knew we could send them out and they would do well."

Tempo runs at Auckland venues until Sunday.



PHOTO: JOSEPHINE KNOWLES



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PHOTO: MARCUS STICKLEY



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You don't have to be Astaire...

by Dean Campbell

It was time to break out the leg warmers and lycra – this month has seen the staging of the Tempo Dance Festival at venues around Auckland.

Festival producer Sandi Goodwin says this year's festival has a huge variety of performers that show the diversity of dance.

"We've got contemporary, we've got the dance party, we've got the hip hop boys and the ballerinas, and we've got *Angels with Dirty Feet* – which is about drug addiction. All kinds, all kinds - we've got dance for everybody. You name it, we've got it," she says.

The festival opened on October 1 with well known New Zealand dancer and choreographer Michael

Parmenter doing his solo show *Nightingale Fever*.

Tempo – formerly known as the Auckland Dance Festival – is now into its fourth year and included a notable international act. Hossam Ramzy arrived from Egypt with the reputation of being Egypt's 'Ambassador of Rhythm.'

As well as live stage shows this year's festival featured a photographic exhibition and film screenings.

The public have had the chance to get involved too, with a day of dance workshops and competition scheduled, as well as a light-hearted 'Dance Off' in Ponsonby's Western Park.

Goodwin says the festival has been a buzz to organise with so many amazing performers appearing. "Dance is fun, it's fantastic," she says.



PHOTO: SIA ASTON



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Drug abuse takes to centre stage

by Dean Campbell

A woman who visited detox and spoke to recovering drug addicts to research for a dance production brought her show to Auckland last week.

Angels With Dirty Feet was just one of the 31 events and shows on offer at this year's Tempo Dance Festival.

Dancer and choreographer Raewyn Hill created the piece – which features two actors, four dancers, and a musical score by Wellington band The Phoenix Foundation – after reading a novel about drug addiction written by Australian Luke Davies.

"It's such a powerful book, so I wrote to the author and said I wanted to make it into a dance production. Then as I worked on it, I realised the issue was much bigger than the book," says Hill.

Hill – who has been dancing professionally for 12 years – says people's image of drug addicts is often stereotypical and incorrect, and she wanted to change that with this production.

"What does a drug addict look like? What a lot of people have in their minds is this person in ripped jeans and the rest, and it's inaccurate. Once you go to the detox meetings you realise everyone is really normal.

TV can sometimes glamorise drug users – a big thing for me is to break down those stereotypes," she says.

The show has been performed in Wellington, Dunedin, and arrived in Auckland last week for a short season.

Hill did a lot of research for the show, such as visiting detox and

speaking to recovering addicts and counsellors. "I felt like I needed to get to the guts of the subject," she says.

After the Auckland season of the show she wants to keep it going, hoping to tour the production to small towns around the country, where she sees drug problems being ignored.

"I just want to help open the subject up, let people talk about it without feeling guilty – because you need to talk about things to make change," she says.

The show has received positive reviews so far, and Hill says it has hit audiences emotionally.

Recovering addicts have approached her after the show and thanked her for making it authentic. "The drug issue is just so out there at the moment – so present in society. And I like to make work about those types of subjects – not fairy-tales," she says.



STEP AHEAD: Raewyn Hill's performance *Angels With Dirty Feet* sheds light on drug use.