

## REVIEW

# French dancer Lamarche takes Icarus to new heights

**What:** Icarus, Benjamin Lamarche

**Where:** Memorial Theatre, June 17

**Reviewed by:** Jenny Stevenson

THE obsession with flying that drove the mythic Icarus to an act of supreme folly informs the choreography of Claude Brumachon in his solo work, *Icarus*, performed by visiting French dancer, Benjamin Lamarche.

Throughout 50 minutes of intense physical theatre, Lamarche journeys through dense layers of movement sequences that play and replay with the sort of noxious compulsion of one who is truly driven.

Using aggressive, jerking movement that is interrupted by inverted poses of startling clarity, the choreography traces the trajectory of a body moving through space, irrespective of whether it is airborne or held back by the forces of gravity.

Lamarche's articulation is extraordinary. When the choreography meanders or falters, he nevertheless maintains the momentum through his clean execution of movement and the sort of intense focus that can only be achieved through a true synchronism of the body and mind.

The simple device of parallel bars allows Lamarche to leave the floor and suspend himself, seemingly mid-air, in moments of unbridled ecstasy or yearning. His gymnastic manoeuvres and flexibility allow for optimum effect, in this respect, while his ability to hold positions stock-still without wavering draws the audience in to participate in his madness.

The momentum of the work is necessarily jagged as Icarus essays flight again and again. The opening image in semi-darkness of the bird foraging for food, partially digesting and then regurgitating it to feed her young, is disquieting.

It informs the rest of the choreography where Icarus endlessly puts on and takes off his coat, as though uncertain whether to cling to or slough off his mortal trappings.

The final achievement of flight is equally unsettling — it is momentarily beautiful, then spirals through a dreadful inevitability to its cruel conclusion.

The structure of the work supports this unease. There is very little flowing movement, the stasis is deliberate and Icarus stares out the audience, unblinking and unconnected.

*Icarus* challenges rather than entertains and questions rather than tells a story. It is however, poetic in its imagery and provides a wondrous and dangerous display of such ability as Lamarche.