

Dance
Scattered
 Warwick Arts
 Centre, Coventry
 ★★☆☆☆

Donald Hutera

We need it to live. It can also, when unleashed by Mother Nature, kill us. Water, that is. The element accounting for at least 70 per cent of human bodyweight is also the major source of inspiration for the latest show from Motionhouse, the popular British dance company founded more than two decades ago by Kevin Finnan and Louise Richards.

Lasting just over an hour, *Scattered* is a vaguely cautionary production buoyed along on a rapid current of associations ranging from environmental issues to more sensual, somatic concerns. The effect is propulsively kinetic and visual and, wisely, never preachy.

Finnan likes to keep his dancers on the go. The quicksilver cast assembled here almost never stops moving. Their sole moments of respite come in a section set in a parched desert, during which all seven dancers are transformed into the alert embodiment of lizardly stoicism. Otherwise the performance is practically jet-propelled. Sophy Smith and Tim Dickinson's immersive soundtrack helps to keep things on the boil with an unrelenting mix of Middle Eastern, Latin and rock-influenced flavours.

By far the most successful aspect of *Scattered* is its integration of film and movement. Simon Dormon's set is a curved white wall apparently fashioned from salvaged boat hulls. It functions as an object the dancers can creep on to, slide down or hurl themselves against, as well as a projection screen for a stream of digital images. Members of the Basque artists' collective Logela Multimedia designed all of it, from Arctic landscapes and cracked mud to murky oceans and suburban swimming pools. Much of this is clever stuff, especially when Finnan and his collaborators play with scale and dimension. Witness the seemingly tiny woman huddling on a bench inside a freezer, or another who appears to be dangling beneath the full-on spray of a giant tap.

Ultimately *Scattered* remains circling in the shallows rather than plumbing the depths of its themes. The climax is a literal avalanche of mindless cataclysmic thrashing. Still, taken on its own terms, the piece presents a sometimes dazzling surface to an audience content to let it all wash over them.

Touring to Nov 27.

www.motionhouse.co.uk