



They barely put a foot wrong

DANCE

Moonwebs and Scorched Thongs
STEPS Youth Dance Company
Playhouse Theatre
Review: Tim Balfour

Capturing brilliantly the boundless energy of hormone-fuelled youth and the after-school antics that it produces, choreographer Alice Lee Holland and the dancers from STEPS combined to create an engaging, comical and insightful examination of gender.

All the school factions were typically presented and scrutinised in Moonwebs: the bookworms, the athletes, the toughs, the weedy mathematicians and the princesses.

What was surprising, however, was the dancers' level of awareness and authenticity in their portrayal of these characters.

To her credit, Holland adds an extra element of depth to this adolescent milieu by using 19th-century period costumes to parallel gender issues of the past and present.

Thirty dancers, ranging from 13 to 20 and each with their own dance style and technique may seem like an insurmountable task for a choreographer.

But such diversity didn't seem to have fazed Holland and was rarely an impediment to the choreographic strength of the work.

In fact, her highly structured work was full of clever imagery and

choreography that challenged the dancers' abilities. Time and again they delivered, often with a commitment and maturity that belied their years.

Among several genuinely wry moments was the work's finale: a dance-off filled with slick tricks and smooth moves — not unlike those on So You Think You Can Dance.

Unlike some youth performances where hapless students are force-fed dated, unsuitable choreography, it was obvious Holland workshopped with the students to optimise their talent.

As a result of channelling and incorporating the ideas and movements of the STEPS dancers, Holland's Moonwebs and Scorched Thongs was a highly entertaining and, at times, a very sophisticated work.



Slick and smooth: The young dancers made all the right moves.