

See below our Young Reviewers' reviews for Women-Wise by Untold Dance Theatre

The chosen review:

'Women-Wise': Witty Wisdoms

In an immersive new production by Untold Dance Theatre, 'Women-Wise' is breathtaking. Choreographer Vicki Hearne delivers a perfect pairing of contemporary dance theatre mixed with the relatable struggles that all women face in our present society, from making it in the world of business, to the limitations of growing old.

An intergenerational cast of seven professional female dancers aged between 22 and 72, Women-Wise reveals the journey of self-discovery that all women must take. It tackles a wide variety of relatively sensitive topics; with a focus on the relationship women have with their bodies. With peer pressure and social media having an incredible presence in our lives, this poignant performance addresses the increasingly negative way women view themselves, and contributes to the realisation that each woman is different, and that's okay.

The delicate sound (Cam Crook) of gentle guitar strumming combined with the beautifully minimalistic staging focuses the eye on the dancers, every small movement and action is fully captured; nothing is missed. Women-Wise manages to encapsulate within one performance the different problems a woman faces at each stage of her life; from coming to terms with your appearance (in a fabulous debut by apprentice performer Kerri Fitzsimons), the rollercoaster that is pregnancy (Julia Thorneycroft), and the subtle inequalities faced by the career seeking female. An incredibly tragic and moving performance was given by Kay Oliver and Alexandra Pickford, depicting the process of growing old and challenging the idea that once you hit a certain age, the parties must stop and you should swap the skimpy outfit and heels for a fluffy bathrobe and slippers.

Women-Wise provides a wonderful blend of emotion and humour, sharing stories of joy and loss that everyone can relate to, whilst finding strength and confidence in each other. An exceptionally well-conveyed piece, Women-Wise provides an intensely gripping experience that will leave you enthralled for days after; it remains one of the most thought-provoking and powerful performances I have ever had the pleasure of seeing,

Women-Wise was shown at Harrogate Theatre on 21st February 2019, and is currently touring the rest of the UK with Untold Dance Theatre, a Bristol-based contemporary dance company.

By Adrienne Ives, Harrogate Ladies College

Here are the other Women-Wise reviews:

'Fascinating and gripping' or 'unsettling and toe-curling'?

The rawness and abnormal nature of "The Untold Dance Theatre" is purely mesmerising and whilst watching the performance you are sent into a hypnotic state viewing the contemporary and emotive choreography/movement. The diverse cast of 7 performers, ranging in age from 20 to 73, represent what it feels like to experience a lack of confidence and self-esteem as a women, by producing captivating and supposedly comedic scenes. 'Supposedly comedic' as a result of the awkwardly incorporated uncomfortable moments of cliché and cringeworthy choreography.

'Women Wise' features differing scenes each with contrasting encouraging messages creating a thought- provoking and gripping production, directed and conceived by Vicki Hearne. Though at times some scenes are challenging to understand and occasionally disturbing due to the intensity of the dancing and the unintelligible gasps and groans being orchestrated by the group; there is a fine line between something being absurd and gripping, as supposed to something being unsettling and toe-curling...

Furthermore, there are moments where the audience are completely immersed by the dance, that the beautiful surroundings of the Theatre of Harrogate are forgotten, it is an extraordinary new experience that is enlightening to encounter. It can't go unnoticed the incredible talent of the musician, (Cam Crook) who initiates calm and relaxing moments contrary to the moments of chaos and clutter created by the group.

Overall, the idea of the production originally seemed authentic and fresh. However, at points it is confusing as to how to react to the scenes being presented in front of you. Moreover, you become incredibly absorbed in understanding what was happening in the performance, that some of the intended themes and ideas are lost, even if it was professionally executed.

Women Wise was performed at the Harrogate Theatre on Thursday 21st February 2019. For further information on the 'Untold Dance Theatre' company visit www.untolddancetheatre.com

By Maisie Jackson, King James' School

Women Wise - Dancing through the glass ceiling

It was a title that had us all guessing; and still guessing after the performance. I had never, nor expected, to see anything like it: issues around lack of confidence and self-esteem being communicated through expressive, thought-provoking dance. As soon as the lights dim, we are plunged into a mesmerising whirlwind of animated, dynamic and often comedic movements, each new sequence challenging a plethora of stigmas associated with women. Packed with duplicitous meanings artistic director, Vicki Hearne, intends each scene to resonate with the audience, provoking and inspiring at every corner on how we view ourselves and society.

One of the most poignant scenes was when the women were portrayed as birds, fluttering around the stage, comedically eyeing up pieces of bread that had been dispersed across the stage. At long last, we heard the first words since the start of the performance, however they were far more complex and moving than we could have imagined. Seemingly innocent phrases, “a bird cannot write a book” (true), “a bird cannot run a nation” (also true), “a bird cannot run a multi-national company” (very funny), all appear perfectly fine: but when they are repeated over and over, a darker connotation is brought forward. The way society views “birds” – or women – is shown in a very sinister view. It was almost as if the dancers could read the audience like a book; as soon as we recognised the true meaning, there was not a second to let it sink in. Immediately, the routine on stage became incredibly ominous and disturbing. A tornado of crimson dresses flung across the stage, and flashes of oppression and domination captured the viewers’ attention like a perfect photograph.

I can only describe it as ingenious. Every step brought something different to mind, challenging our thoughts in hilarious ways and then plunging us into harsh reality. Physical strength, society’s opinion and appearance - all associated with women - hadn’t really crossed my mind before. Now I will never think about them in the same way...

Women Wise ran at Harrogate Theatre on 21 February 2019

By Hannah Winter, GSAL