

## review



**Flying:**  
Kirsty Martin takes flight above Robert Curran in the Australian Ballet's *Paquita* at the State Theatre.

Picture:  
DARRYL GREGORY

## PAQUITA

**Where:** State Theatre until June 18  
**Reviewer:** Chris Boyd

IT'S an enormous credit to the Australian Ballet that it has produced — and continues to produce — choreographers from its ranks: past and present, top to bottom.

Even members of the corps de ballet have contributed. Senior artist Tim Harbour is an inventive and original dance-maker from whom we are sure to see much, in time.

But, here, soloist Paul Knobloch gets the big break. And it's easy to see why. His new work *Valetta* — named in honour of his late grandmother — is the curtain-raiser in a program that ends with the *Paquita* Grand Pas.

And Knobloch's "Grandma" is every bit the match of Marius Petipa's choreography. One can imagine the company showing off its men (*Valetta* is choreographed for 15 of them and one lucky ballerina) with Knobloch's liquid, elegant piece for years to come.

It looks alarmingly like a synchronised swimming routine to begin with. Amber Scott is held aloft, at the peak of a tiered crown, before the boys start scissoring their white-tight legs around. With its swirling eddies and rippling little leaps, *Valetta* could look awfully messy if it wasn't as well-rehearsed and performed as it is here. But it is, nevertheless, a substantial and impressive work.

It's performed to skittering and breakneck music (thrillingly well played) for violin and orchestra by Max Bruch.

Between *Valetta* and *Paquita* are five pas de deux. Apart from giving the dancers the opportunity to show off, their main interest lies in the varieties of partnering and balance between guys and dolls.

Nobuo Fujino dances like a warrior — like a little Nijinsky — in the florid and melodramatic *Le Corsaire*. Madeleine Eastoe plays his coy mistress, star-drive barely ticking over.

Rachel Rawlins is like a jumping bean in *La Favorita*. Remi Wortmeyer can hardly keep her on the ground.

Tristan Message provides the beefcake in *Spring Waters*, playing Tarzan to Camilla Vergotis's Jane Doe.

Olivia Bell gives us *Kiss of the Spiderwoman* in her *Black Swan* pas de deux, but she's way too evil to impress, let alone seduce, her Prince (Adam Bull).

Lucinda Dunn danced so well in *Diana and Acteon* that I stopped noticing how unspeakably ghastly her outfit was. Regrettably, not even Nureyev could have distracted us from Robert Curran's porno tunic.

And, finally, *Paquita* is danced so well, you won't know where to look. When Gina Brescianini and Jane Casson took to the stage together, I was torn. Which to watch? Luckily, everyone freezes when principal artist Kirsty Martin waltzes on. There's simply no point competing with her.