

Theatre/Sian Prior Opera/Neil Jillett

Angelic images

What: Still Angela **Where:** CUB Malt-house, 113 Sturt St, Southbank
When: Until April 27 **Bookings:** 9685 5111 **Tickets:** \$30.50 - \$40.00 **Rating:** ★★★★★

Still Angela is Jenny Kemp's first original play since *The Black Sequin Dress* in 1996 and whilst it has much in common with that work, it also signals some fascinating new directions for this Melbourne based writer- director.

Once again kemp has worked collaboratively with a team of performers to transform the words on the page into an image rich production, The Angela of the title role is performed by four different women, including long time team members Natasha Herbert, Margaret Mills, Felicity MacDonald and dancer Ros Warby. The production is choreographed by Helen Herbertson, and its coherent movement style is integral to the success of the work

Still Angela explores the different states of consciousness which we all inhabit but upon which we rarely reflect. They are shaped by memories and emotions, by dreams and lived moments. Kemp is keenly aware of the silent internal monologues - which accompany even the most trivial of our daily activities, and the different "selves" we become at different stages of our lives. She also acknowledges the physical sensations that accompany moments of elevated emotion. Kemp externalises these internal manifestations through her actors' bodies speaking those silent words out loud and moving those bodies in a series of stylised movements.

The narrative is fragmented in *Still Angela*, but we become aware of a troubled relationship between Angela and her partner Jack, and of a journey she takes through the Australian desert landscape. Jacqueline Everitt's design and David Murray's lighting offer us a series of exquisite images, where dead trees seem to float in mid-air, and a vast night sky is illuminated by stars. The landscape invokes a state of transcendence for Angela.

What's new in *Still Angela* is a wicked playfulness. There are Felini-esque moments including a scene where a red jacketed waiter (Simon Wilton, who plays Jack) croons a song to the row of different Angelas seated in a restaurant.

Sit back, open your mind and allow the images and allusions, the products of Jenny Kemp's fertile imagination to simply wash over you. You'll probably come away wishing, like me, that someone would stage a retrospective of all her original works.