

The Sydney Morning Herald

Entertainment

Bush Bailando and Forge review: Double bill of flamenco works proves engaging

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Annalouise Paul in Forge *Photo: Supplied*

BUSH BAILANDO AND FORGE

Riverside, May 5. Until May 7

★★★★½

This is a double bill of short works by Australian dancer-choreographers who have drawn on Spain's flamenco in the development of their individual styles.

Pepa Molina's *Bush Bailando* has the more distinctive flamenco content with her vivacious "talking" footwork, speedy travelling steps, dazzling turns and a cracking castanet item. She is a powerful dancer, skilled in punctuating her moves with the strong accents of flamenco.

Apart from a refreshing sense of humour – sending herself up with a grin when things look like getting too serious – the Australian elements are mostly plucked from bush and beach.

For instance, there is a carpet of dry leaves on the stage and a sequence that begins with what looks like a sea creature being swept by waves but turns out to be the ruffles of the very long train on her traditional flamenco costume thrown over her crouching figure.



Pepa Molina in *Bush Bailando*.

Molina works with two onstage musicians – guitarist Marco Van Doornum and clarinet/saxophone player Stuart Vandegraaff – as well as featuring a lively recorded soundtrack by Hector Gonzalez Sanchez. It's a very talented line-up presenting interesting and engaging material.

Annalouise Paul has chosen a darker, moodier side of flamenco in *Forge*, whose title refers to the shaping of a human soul – in this case, her own love of Spain and its culture.

This shines through her rather static, often jagged gestural style. Her flamenco references are only occasional, and mostly aligned to its posturing stances, with her arms and upper body dramatically outlined by lighting designer Roderick van Gelder.

Paul, too, has a team of creatives. Marianthe Loucataris is the composer and Helen Rivero the vocalist in a sympathetic sound component. Tobhiyah Stone Feller has created an ingenious costume that transforms from a full skirt of many colours to a straight, one-colour skirt with a bustle. Just a pity that Paul was so involved with using it that it became a distraction.

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