

# DFS

Cecilia Bengolea - François Chaignaud

PRESS REVIEW

Compagnie Vlovajob Pru  
Cecilia Bengolea - François Chaignaud

Culture › Theatre & Dance › Reviews

## DFS, Cecilia Bengolea and François Chaignaud, Sadler's Wells, London, review: Ballet meets Jamaican dancehall

Sound and movement rhythms are set against each other in a show that throws in mediaeval singing, a dancehall soundtrack, and clopping pointe shoes



Dancers perform 'DFS' *Herve Veronese*

Blending ballet, Jamaican dancehall and mediaeval polyphony, *DFS* is the kind of show where dancers sing complex harmonies while they change from pointe shoes into sneakers. Though the promised small dog did not join

the cast this time, it's a shaggy dog story of a performance, meandering from quirky to virtuoso.

Though both work as independent artists, Cecilia Bengolea and François Chaignaud are regular collaborators. In 2016, they were the first outside choreographers to create work for Tanztheater Wuppertal Pina Bausch. *DFS*, made for their own company, was developed with dancehall specialists, including Damion BG Dancerz, who has a starring role here.

The show starts in darkness, with layered voices. Though there's also a dancehall soundtrack, the singing is performed live by the dancers. It sets intricate sound and movement rhythms against each other, while underlining the human, physical quality of singing. The vocals get less polished during high-speed moves, when breath is under pressure.

The three ballet dancers add their own percussive note, their shoes clapping as they move through dancehall steps. Bengolea and Chaignaud's ballet choreography is much more limited; dancers (including Chaignaud) teeter on pointe as if stiltwalking. It's more fun to see ballet-trained dancers bringing their flexibility and speed to dancehall.

The strongest dancing comes from the dancehall specialists. Craig Black Eagle is taut and sharp, with a livewire energy to each twist of his body. Damion moves with fluid looseness, the big steps bold and juicy. In an unexpected scene, he beckons half the stalls audience up on stage to learn a routine. He's a marvellous teacher, getting a big cast moving with confidence and increasing speed.

Bengolea and Chaignaud themselves increase the random qualities of the show, wandering into the tighter dances performed by other people. Bengolea, who trained in urban dance forms before researching dancehall, throws in some acrobatic moves. Chaignaud, his long hair bundled up in a woolly hat, adds wriggly steps.

At just 50 minutes, *DFS* still straggles, with film clips and many shifts of tone. But the appeal is in the sense of experiment, of different kinds of physical expression, and in some big, expansive dancing.

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**DANCE**

**Cecilia Bengolea & François Chaignaud**

SADLER'S WELLS, LONDON

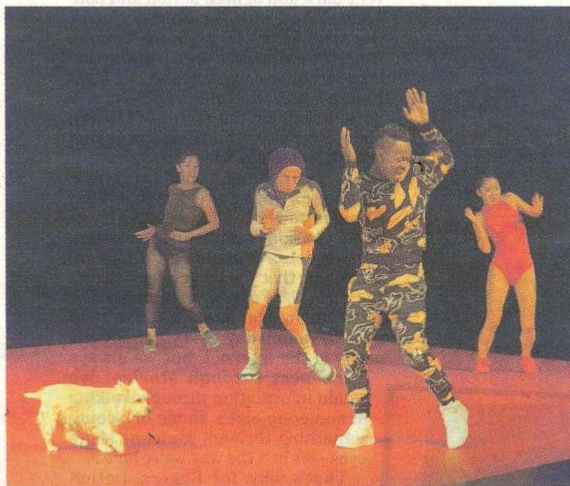
★★★★

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**Dancers blend ballet and dancehall as well as singing** HERVÉ VÉRONÈSE

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THE INDEPENDENT

**DANCE**

**Matthew Bourne's Highland Fling**

PICKAQUOY CENTRE, KIRKWALL  
Scottish Ballet dance Matthew Bourne's "Romantic wee ballet", which updates the sprites and Highlanders of *La Sylphide* to the Scotland of *Trainspotting*, with feral sylphs and sharp designs. This tour brings the full-scale production to the Scottish islands for the first time. (01856 879 900) tonight

**Windrush: Movement of the People**

PEACOCK THEATRE, LONDON WC2  
Phoenix Dance Theatre's new work looks at the experience of Caribbean immigrants coming to the UK 70 years ago. Plus Christopher Bruce's *Shadows* and Sandrine Monin's *Calyx*. (020 7863 8000) to Sat

**POP**

**Rejille Snow**

VARIOUS VENUES  
After time spent mingling with Loyle Carner and Kendrick Lamar, this Dublin-to-Brooklyn transplant commands centre-stage on a strikingly distinct debut