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REVIEW

ballet.*magazine**Sound Affairs - Jean Abreu**'Boulevard of Broken Dreams'**February 2009  
London, The Place**by Ian Palmer***sound affairs**

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We have all walked down the *Boulevard of Broken Dreams* in our times, but never perhaps as deftly, never as satisfyingly, as in the company of Jean Abreu and his dancers. The Brazilian choreographer, who is Laban trained, presented his new piece at The Place two weeks ago as part of a nationwide tour and as fresh and intriguing a work at that venue I have yet to see: four dancers, four musicians (the splendid Mavron Quartet) and an hour of vivid

dance.

The setting is a town square, complete with park bench, bin and musician 'buskers', and its premise is the coming together or those unknown to each other, of their interactions and of the friendships and disagreements that ensue. It is dance as bond (an idea also explored in Akram Khan's recent *bahok*) and reminiscent of the culture of street dance, whose vocabulary informs much of Abreu's language. The work is structured into individual scenarios, which prove both familiar and, occasionally, comic: the man on the bench who peers over your shoulder to read the paper; the one who takes up all of the remaining space. Each scene proceeds from these incidents into rippling, muscularly textured dance phrases that appear as little fugues scattering across the stage.

The secret of the work's success, aside from the evident invention of Abreu's choreography, is the employment of live musicians and the commissioning of a new score from Charlie Barber. There are echoes of Beethoven's slow movements in parts of his music, which inspire moments of heartening choreographic lyricism, as well as pockets of pelting rhythmic drive that charge the dance up with electric verve. The dancers themselves are tremendous, each attuned to Abreu's distinctive choreographic manner, and the work itself is a gem.



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