

# Broken Chords, The Place, London

Metro, 9 March 2006, Keith Watson

It may be a cliché to say that the greatest art is the result of personal suffering but it is stained with the truth. There is nothing like a bit of heartbreak, cut up with love and loss, to stir the creative juices and Charlotte Vincent has struck gold with Broken Chords, which unflinchingly charts the collapse of her marriage. This is her break-up album and, hewn from the heart, it's a work of rare beauty.

Over the past decade, Vincent Dance Theatre has cut against the grain of British dance, creating full-length physical theatre that looks to Europe for inspiration. That approach pays off handsomely in this 90-minute dive into why love turns sour that ultimately becomes a lesson in survival. Part elegy, part black comedy, it works some stunning dance into the patchwork of fractured relationships that litter the stage.

At first, there is a danger the night will drown in melancholy as we're strung along by a series of tortured souls, limbs wrenched by weeping violins. But, just when the misery hits overload, Vincent tears up the rulebook and turns the spotlight on a dance rehearsal where the choreographer is cracking up. It's a brave, potentially embarrassing step but, by personalising her story, Vincent makes a vital emotional connection.

Making the most of a marvellous eight-strong cast, who double as dancers and musicians, Vincent conjures up a love story driven by sorrow, regret and bewilderment but never bitterness. If there is a good part to breaking up, then Broken Chords has it nailed.