

Punchdrunk, The Lowry, Manchester

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The Sheffield-based, internationally-acclaimed Vincent Dance Theatre celebrates its tenth birthday with this darkly humorous journey into shadowy world of vaudeville and burlesque.

Against a strikingly- designed backdrop reflecting the decayed grandeur of an old burlesque theatre, the six performers appear like the ghosts of former dancers in a show that is edgy and uncompromising, sometimes startlingly violent, in fact, but also funny and moving.

The intent is to reveal the tawdry secrets and lies behind the teeth and smiles of the show's petty squabbles and intimate secrets may be laid bare and yet, as the old adage has it, the show must go on.

Patrycja Kujawska, as the veteran performer who is always ready for her close-up, travels a particularly dark route, from the hilarious way she opens the show, experimenting with her own stage-entrance, to a heartbreaking and tawdry striptease, while TC Howard and Aurora Lubos are more consistently funny as the feuding pretenders to her throne.

Meanwhile, the two male dancers, Geir Hytten and Janusz Orlik, add a darker, distinctly menacing edge to the sexual politics, and, fittingly, aerialist Lindsey Butcher maintains more of a distance from proceedings in this original, compelling and provocative production.