

Vincent Dance Theatre

The Mappin Art Gallery,
Sheffield

Stephanie Ferguson

BARING the body as well as the soul seems to be all the rage in physical theatre as companies explore gender-bending role play and angst-ridden relationships in these times of blurred sexual identity.

In their fiercely provocative debut piece *Intercourse*, Charlotte Vincent and Harry Theaker flash the flesh, but stir the brain rather than the loins, as they examine sexual possession and the quest for personal intimacy and equality

rather than dominance or deviation.

The powerful, angry duet, directed by Gregory Nash, contains strong language and even tougher physical grappling which makes wrestling seem pale at times.

Stark naked, as if newborn, Vincent and Theaker pose questions about sexual conditioning from childhood, experimenting with clothes and cross-dressing to assume roles from simpering Cindy doll to brutal lover.

All the sexual stereotypes are there, from Vincent as Bimbo with pert bum to Theaker, flexing his muscles as posing gay icon.

In a blonde wig, with gaping red mouth and vacant eyes, Vincent brilliantly becomes a blow-up doll. You want to cheer as she rips off the hair, smears off the lipstick and dances a tirade against male domination in a furious, ranting solo.

Intercourse examines the themes of women as victims of pornography, the old Madonna, wife, and whore syndrome plus sexual power struggles, gay and straight.

Bouts of violent partnering, crashing throws and

aggressive grabs give way to lyrical moments with Vincent cradling Theaker, the object of her agony and desire, like a baby to a soundtrack of monastic chanting.

Both are strong, beautifully controlled performers and Theaker moves from disarming little boy to pubescent youth in another brilliantly observed solo.

But the projected images of genitalia over the double bed don't so much disturb as annoy.