

Wonders of water world evoked in entertaining, educational work



Blue period ...
Dean Walsh
brings the
marine
environment
to the stage.

Photo:
Natalie Ayton

PRIME: ORDERLY

Riverside Theatre, October 25

Reviewed by Jill Sykes

DEAN WALSH had a two-year fellowship to research "marine sub-scapes and human-animal movement" for his work *Prime: Orderly*, and it shows. The thoughtful detail he has brought together, including a short talk and question and answer session with a marine biologist, diving or marine professional at each performance, gives the piece an unusual dimension.

This is about alerting people to the wonders of the world underwater, the need to care for it and co-exist peaceably with its inhabitants. On opening night we heard about a huge shark moving quietly among fish it would usually eat (plus a couple of scuba divers) – except it was

there, like the others, for its essential cleansing process by cleaner fish. At that moment, it was simply one of the marine community.

Insights like this, and Walsh's own diving experiences, have

The importance of human breath is emphasised.

fed into his staging of *Prime: Orderly*. It comes in two parts, the first virtually a solo for Walsh, exploring the perceptions of a predator and involving an "environmental entity" espaliered centre stage by wires, and the peeling of several costume layers that allow

the featured artist to present himself in different forms.

The second part is a trio with Natalie Ayton and Kathryn Puie exploring the relationships between bodies (not only our own) and the marine environment. The importance of human breath is emphasised by a great deal of blowing up of balloons and wine-cask skins – too much by my calculation. It looked like padding in place of better-developed movement.

Though pleasingly pliable and watery, and well performed, the choreography is repetitive and the weakest part of the production.

But then *Prime: Orderly* has other things to offer from its dance theatre base.