AVANT-GARDE was the order of the night when the Link Dance Company performed its first season for 2008 last weekend. A collection of three carefully choreographed dance pieces aimed to challenge prejudices, explore the human struggle and compare the deception of memory to reality.

The team of nine dancers are a selection of graduates from the West Australian Academy of Performing Arts, Victorian College of the Arts and the New Zealand School of Dance.

In the opening piece, Mountains Never Meet, choreographer Martin del Amo’s desire to push the boundaries of contemporary dance was immediately clear.

Shunning the usual coordinated costumes, del Amo dressed his dancers in a jumble of coloured tracksuit pants and jumpers.

The piece aimed to challenge the common belief that “dancers can’t walk, at least not like real people” and the dancers replaced smooth and fluid movement with rigid bouncing uncontrolled spins.

Set to an eerie back-drop of thundering percussion and radio static, it was an organised mess of dancers walking in seemingly random circles and squares.

With great lighting and music, Mountains Never Meet was individual and the intermittent movements in the choreography proved to be effective.

For Paea Leach’s work Red Lipstick Manifesto, the dancers emerged wearing faceless white masks.

The dancers contorted and writhed in each others hands as one puppeteered the other. One part of the piece, in which the dancers dragged themselves across the stage in a jagged motion, was particularly effective.
While visually intriguing, Leach’s written explanation of The Red Lipstick Manifesto was muddled and left the true meaning of the dance unclear.

Two Lies, the final and most impressive of the three dances, was based on the deception of memory and how it grows further from reality over time.

Choreographer Lucy Guerin, who brought Structure and Sadness to the Perth International Arts Festival this year, based Two Lies on her childhood on a farm in South Australia.

Cleverly lit and performed by Holly Bennett, Carly Armstrong and Kylie Murray, the dance tells the same story twice with a slight change in movement and atmosphere each time.

Two Lies, which was awarded a New York Dance and Performance Award in 1996, is gimmick-free and very naturally communicates a poignant story through dance.

But it is the LINK Dance Company dancers who deserve the greatest recognition, for stepping up to the challenge of performing such a diverse trio of works.

Oscillate
Link Dance Company