

Review: Lindsay Davis, Dominion Post, 26 July 2007

## Aurélia's Oratorio

Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> July to Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> July - Westpac St James Theatre

# Alternate worlds explored through circus-hued eyes

**WHAT:** Aurelia's Oratorio

**WHERE:** Westpac St James Theatre, till Sunday

**REVIEWED BY:** Lindsay Davis

**A**URELIA'S ORATORIO is the most sublime piece of circus theatre that Wellington audiences will get the opportunity to see this year.

Its fantastical world of illusion will transport you into the furthestmost corners of your mind.

Starring Aurelia Thierree, the granddaughter of Charlie Chaplin and daughter of circus theatre pioneers Victoria (who wrote the show for her) and Jean Baptiste Thierree — whose *Le Cirque Invisible* was one of the highlights of the 1998 Festival of the Arts — this performance is very much about the theatre of the mind where our

everyday reality and perceptions are challenged.

Thierree's work, along with four supporting actors', while being physical and drawing on elements of vaudeville, is more about letting your imagination go as simple props — a chest of drawers, a coat rack, clothes that dance and twitch on their own, cascading rivers of plush red material — take on a Lewis Carroll-like significance where even the simple act of getting dressed not only has the crowd laughing its appreciation but also shaking its collective head in wide-eyed wonder.

Just like when brother James' *Junebug Symphony* dazzled audiences, the hand is very much quicker than the



**Aurelia Thierree:** Theatre of mind.

eye and reality, as in *Alice in Wonderland*, is what you make of it.

The result is a topsy-turvy word that is absurdist at times — but always charming. And, just as in real life, there is a dark undercurrent that invades Aurelia's restless dreams — headless figures, ticking clocks, wild animals and especially the colour red, which evocatively dominates the set and costumes.

Without wishing to give anything away, for this is theatre that demands its audience suspend belief, the closing scene alone recalls a Salvador Dali moment that left an appreciative audience wondering wonderfully at this whimsical piece of conceptual theatre.