



Alexander Ekman's *Cacti* piece will be performed at Royal Concert Hall, Nottingham, by dancers from the acclaimed Nederlands Dans Theater.

Dance company in *fruitful return*

One of the world's most celebrated contemporary dance companies, Nederlands Dans Theater 2, is back in the UK, including two dates in Nottingham. Artist director Paul Lightfoot tells **HOLLIE WHITING** about the new production

SITTING on the North Sea coast of the Netherlands, The Hague may not have the size or cultural reputation of cities like Paris or London. For dancers and choreographers, however, the city is a powerful magnet, for one simple reason – Nederlands Dans Theater.

Since it was founded in 1959, the contemporary dance company has attracted the world's finest dance makers, performers, composers and designers to its relatively humble abode. Not only that, but the work they all produce is equally sought after by audiences.

Here in the UK, our love affair is largely with Nederlands Dans Theater 2 – the 'youth wing' which began in 1978 and is filled with talented dancers aged 17-22.

Each of them spends just three years with the company, before moving into NDT1 or continuing their career elsewhere.

Repeat visits from this young company has built up a loyal following – and rightly so.

The combination of energy, enthusiasm and technical ability displayed by the dancers is

intoxicating, with each new crop of dancers as skilful as the last, and showing an emotional intelligence way beyond their years.

Add to that the calibre of choreographers who queue up to make work with NDT2, and it's no wonder audiences look forward to their arrival.

"Everybody always asks what is it that makes NDT2 special," says artistic director, Paul Lightfoot, "and what makes an NDT2 dancer special. And I think the answer is openness, honesty and integrity - those three elements coming together."

The company will bring a total of seven different works to the UK, performing a tailor-made selection at each venue.

The lineup of choreographers includes Hans van Manen, Johan Inger, Edward Clug, Alexander Ekman and Lightfoot himself along with creative partner, Sol León. Some works are poetic, others fast-paced and frenetic – all come with the NDT2 stamp of quality.

"Each work has its own individual character," explains Lightfoot, "so it's extremely diverse for audiences."

"There are bound to be works people enjoy more, find more interesting or have a greater connection to – because that's what we

constantly strive for here, to make sure each creation, each choreographer has diversity."

One of the pieces which will be performed at every venue on the company's UK tour, is Alexander Ekman's *Cacti*.

Previously seen in 2012, it's back by popular demand after audiences lapped up Ekman's unique vision and style.

Standing on 16 low plinths, the dancers move in perfect unison, caught in the dramatic lighting design as they run, whirl and make percussive sounds with their hands.

In short, it's a work that sums up the NDT2 spirit.

"Alexander is very gifted, not just choreographically but also theatrically," says Lightfoot. "He began his career at NDT as a dancer but stopped dancing really early in order to focus on choreography. He was associate choreographer here for three years, and *Cacti* was his major hit.

"It's a wonderful group work, with a real sense of humour, and a great way to round off an evening."

● NDT2 bring their UK tour to the Royal Concert Hall, Nottingham on May 10 and 11. For performances times and ticket details call 0115 989 5555 or go to trch.co.uk.