



ARTS

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Magic carpet ride

THEATRE

Children's Cheering Carpet
Compagnia TPO
Bradley Studio, UWA
Review: Pier Leach

The Children's Cheering Carpet — a digital, interactive installation that uses touch sensors to manipulate images — is the colourful fruit of some fun technology.

But as a theatrical experience for children it is really little more than a momentarily striking gimmick.

It starts out like library story time, only without the books. A woman sits on a stool at the edge of the "carpet" (which is actually a large white dance mat) and with a slow, calm, thickly accented voice tells a sketchy story about the imagined origins of the Japanese garden (Italy's Compagnia TPO also has Kurdish and Italian "garden" experiences).

With no visual aids it's a bit of a slog for the squirming tots in the audience, so it's a relief when

the storytelling gives way to a performance by a single dancer who lights up the touch-responsive carpet with some beautiful images.

Before long the two performers invite children up on to the carpet to participate in small groups to walk, skip and roll across the carpet. It's a bit of a mystery why at a couple of points they blindfold the children as well as a couple of hapless parents to lead them across the carpet — after all, it is supposed to be a visual experience.

In the end, what happens on the carpet has very little to do with the framing story, which in itself is esoteric and ultimately meaningless.

It feels as if it were concocted as an excuse to call the show theatre, when in fact it is simply some cool interactive technology that is best employed when the children are jumping around on it playing musical chairs-style games.

It's a monumental case of style over substance.

Children's Cheering Carpet runs until February 24.



Gimmick: Beautiful images on the "carpet".