The rehearsal room for Parallelo’s Distance Project has not been in a building but on a website. For several years the company - previously known as Doppio Teatro - has, through the auspices of artistic director, Teresa Crea, brought together a diaspora of artists from Teatro Kismet in Italy, Theatre Athenor in France and the Nottingham Playhouse in the UK. Crea and video artist, Laurent Dupont co-ordinated contributions from nine other artists to bring together a composite of image, sound and text all relating to the themes and paradoxes of distance, with its associated implications of exile and migration.

Now this project has been converted into a fifty minute performance work which combines the work of Crea and Dupont with design by James Coulter, sound by Robin Rimbaud (aka Scanner) broadcast sound from Jason Sweeney, digital image creation by Lynne Sanderson, DJ Michael Goodfellow, photography by Peter Heidrich and four live performers.

The Queen’s Theatre is an intriguing place at the best of times. Its faded glory dismantled now, it is literally a shell, a blank page waiting for the next designer’s brush. With Parallelo comes, around the performance perimeter, a playful installation by James Coulter of petrol bowsers with birdcage helmets and screens. Then we move into what looks like a café - with bright red chairs and lounges - surrounded by ambient beats from Scanner and DJ Goodfellow. The production values are excellent, the sound is dance club best practice.

The performance itself is a familiar multimedia combination of projected video, prepared sound and live performance. In only a few years on from companies such as Japanese outfit, Dumb Type, these conventions have become a new orthodoxy with their own proscenium and an often predictably declamatory performance style.

Another aspect of this new orthodoxy is a random, fragmented use of text. It has plenty of precedents in the Surrealists’ Exquisite Corpses, William Burroughs’ cut-ups and so on. The avant garde has had nearly a century to
experiment with the mangling of texts and there is hardly a cul-de-sac that has not been visited.

The Parallelo performers appear in a fanfare of sound washes reminiscent of early eighties Eno. *There is little point in getting upset*, they proclaim in choric voice. The sound now is like radio just off the station, the voice is speaking Italian. On the wall, there is video footage of scaffolding, the camera explores it with almost obsessional repetition. The theme is displacement and alienation but the images are cliched. This is yet more urban emptiness, later to be contrasted by romantic images from nature. *Now is the time*, the actors intone, *to recognise these areas of difficulty.*

There are vignettes of emotional isolation as one of the performers, Astrid Pill strokes her skin. *I would like you to touch me*, she repeats with intensifying angst while close-up video images are neurotically magnified on the screen. Then the actors rail against Greed, Capital Gains, Market Forces. This is followed by revolving police lights and still photos of nasturtiums and peonies. *What is the horror of distance?* someone asks. Jason Sweeney takes to broadcasting. *New World Disorder*, microphone inverted, Rob Zombie creepy voice. Then, over by the video wall, someone enacts a political prisoner thrusting her fingers into her mouth.

All this, *In the Time of Distance*. As the abstraction of the title suggests, this project is not aiming to clarify or narrate but rather to suggest and imply. But too often the text is merely rhetorical, lacking either wit or the kind of intensity and particularity that such a montage requires. The less linear narrative there is, the more the shards and fragments not only need to startle and capture us, but give some shared reference points. Unfortunately, neither text, image nor the live performers achieve this more than fleetingly. As they say, *there is little point in getting upset*. Unfortunately, there is little point in anything here. At the end of the presentation I didn’t feel bewildered or confused, just unengaged and unchallenged - and I am sure that is not the kind of distance Para//elo would have wanted.