

Brussel Deze Week 01.03.2006

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Jan Decorte Puts Words in Another's Mouth

Bêt noir is the new youth project from the choreographer Wim Vandekeybus. Together with thirteen actors and ten musicians from Molenbeek's fanfakids – all between age eight and fourteen – he worked during two months on this production around the eponymous version by Jan Decorte of Oedipus. But because the little ones all had to go to school, the rehearsals could only take place during the Christmas holidays, the weekends and a few evenings. With that fact in the back of your mind, you can only call the result unbelievable. In that amount of time, some professional companies would have only discussed the text. This performance includes a complete musical score, professional short films, a choreography, and long sections of theatre text which were faultlessly memorized by the meter and half high stand-ins for Decorte and Sigrid Vinks. The addition of youth makes for an up-to-date version of the tragedy, which includes: a young lady of fourteen in a cat suit in the role of the blind fortune teller Tiresias, whose hand is held by his/her 'lover' (a black boy of ten); three tiny sphinxes in red playsuits, who – after they fell into smithereens – reappeared as the oracle; a helmeted Creon on a motorcycle; and an impressive shoot-out on the three forked road where Oedipus (with a Mercedes) murders his father Laios.

With *Rent a Kid, No Bullshit*, Vandekeybus made a charming as well as complex-less youth performance from which splashed with the pleasure to perform. What was missing of that in *Bêt noir* was perhaps the dynamic because there was less time and place for dance moments because of the text, and because there was just a little too much 'white space' between the lines of text. Even though the children performed their text well during the première (with Decorte and Vinks themselves in the front row), they slowed the tempo in the other scenes in which there was driving, rolling, or running in circles. Through that you got the impression that the text that they spoke went a little over their heads - perhaps in the form rather than in the content. Decorte's 'childlike' language is probably not for nothing called 'childlike' and not 'childish'. Sometimes the scenes had something just a little too much like an assignment that had to be performed, but that will probably get better when they will have done it a few times. Actually, Oedipus goes over everyone's head to some degree, so you might as well tackle it sooner rather than later. In any case it was fascinating to see how the young people keep going in face of death, with which the words and images of this performance were so permeated.