

Choreography Conjures Dark Powers

Ultima Vez with sober "7 for a Secret never to be told"

Barcelona - It looks as though the latest production by Wim Vandekeybus will be a key performance. The nearly new company of Ultima Vez presented at the Grec Festival in Barcelona a première which shimmered in spite of its soberness. With just dance and theatrical means, the choreographer taps into the dark power of myths, which through fantastic and grotesque images become sporadically perceptible. After the conjuration of *7 for a Secret never to be told*, the work of Ultima Vez can never be the same again.

Dance

As in fairy tales, Wim Vandekeybus, throughout his performance, shows facets of his earlier productions, marks from the paths he has crossed. *7 for a Secret never to be told* begins in the pitch-dark and as in *Bereft of a Blissful Union*, a sparing lamp is lit. It is the source which makes everything around it visible, the energy from which stormy powers emanate.

Once more it is striking in how far Vandekeybus' choreography is constructed as an outburst and control of energy. The seven scenes of *7 for a Secret never to be told* each begin with a practically empty stage which afterwards becomes overgrown with a single figure who is later surrounded by a whirl of bodies.

His first performances, as the debut *What the Body Does Not Remember* (1987) and *Les portuses de mauvaises nouvelles*, were a reckless flirting between game and danger. Something of this is still visible in the fast duets in which leaping dancers get pushed over in mid-air by the sweep of a leg. Or in the bigger than life feathers that come whizzing out of the air right next to the dancers. The frontal defiance of danger is no longer the only issue. Now a higher, blind force strikes and the little people have to try to find a way through that. The game has become moderation rather than challenge. Themes from Vandekeybus' oeuvre have evolved. The short-story around the artist Carlo Verano (in *Always the Same Lies*) has broadened towards mythology. In the case of *7 for a Secret never to be told* the mystery is hidden in an Irish counting rhyme [...], a practical coat hanger for the partition of the scenes [...].

In his latest productions, music, film, video, photo and movements were united. Attention for so many forms of expression harmed the development of a dance language which got stuck in the infamous leap-roll to the ground, the sprinting in circles or the fight-duets. To the surprise of many the choreographer is concentrating in this new performance on theatricality and dance. Is it a resting point in his oeuvre? A return to his source? Or an enrichment of his dance vocabulary in which certain themes have been deepened?

Vandekeybus has taught his new group - of the old group only Lieve Meeussen and Rasmus Olme remain - his vocabulary very quickly. Per scene some of his idioms pop up. Running backward making arcs in 'Sorrow' or tough duets in 'Silver'. Joy is theatrical with John Campbell questioning the magpie and the colorful personality changes.

By turns the actors step into the truth machine from which they reappear as a sausage, a fish or red haired twins. The fantastic elements already point to the fairy tale world that - as it is understood - Vandekeybus wants to work with in the future.

It must have been a challenge to fill in all these elements in a distinguishing way with only theatre and dance. And it works, be it that the movements are repeated quickly and make it difficult to concentrate on their detailed execution. Some solos are too thin and could have used some more attention. The presence of the magpie (beautifully skittish by Carlos de Haro Flores) and a human witness form the axe of the piece. The magpie is usually ominous, sometimes she is a threat and attacks. Although the performance's course is clear it is not logical where it leads to. It ends in chaos and mystery. The one who was chasing with loud bounces of his microphone remains orphaned and contemplates the battlefield.

Geert Sels

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