

Le Soir, June 1993 - **The Dance of the Senses**

Wim Vandekeybus and Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker triumph in Munich and Amsterdam with their new creations.

After having acclaimed "The Passions" by Thierry Salmon, presented at the beginning of the festival, the audience of the prestigious 'Theater der Welt 93', organized in Munich, declared the new creation by Wim Vandekeybus, "**Her Body Doesn't Fit Her Soul**", a triumph. The incredible Cuvillies Theater, overflowing with gold and red, was filled to the brim Friday evening for this *première* with which Wim Vandekeybus hits hard. To be sure, one finds his usual universe of mad dives, fascinating whirls, and bodies which explode in all directions. But more than ever, Vandekeybus treats the project as a whole.

"Her Body Doesn't Fit Her Soul" speaks in its manner of all the limits that our body or our soul impose on us. To illustrate this subject, the choreographer has, notably, used two blind dancers. Not with the goal of showing us the difference between these and the other dancers, but to evoke the different ways of seeing, feeling, touching, speaking, imagining. What he proposes is in no way a piece 'about the blind', but a way to explore a different universe by calling to all our senses. And one rediscovers that the body which surrounds us imposes multiple limits, different for everyone.

The actor Dirk Roothoof's role is another example of this theme. Used to words and theater, he becomes a dancer here. One of the strongest images of the piece is the moment when the amazing Saïd Gharbi, one of the two blind performers, teaches Dirk the movements of an undulating and sensual Oriental dance, which the actor then passes on to the other dancers. Each comes in turn, eyes closed, to slowly caress the dancing body of the one before, the movement transferred from one body to another like magic. Images like this one fill this piece in which energy, humour and emotion rise from everywhere. There is the white screen on which unfold the adventures of "Elba and Federico", a couple which never ceases to only cross each other's path. When he comes home, she leaves for work. Each morning it's the same ballet - kisses, laughs, frustration. Asserting himself more and more as a cinematographer, Vandekeybus films all this with an astonishing sense of image and editing. On the stage a man speaks Arab with volubility and ease. However, no one understands him. Problems of communication, language, comprehension. A young woman makes the curtain undulate while dancing. She is blind but she fills our eyes with magnificent images. And later, when she speaks with Dirk Roothoof (fantastic and funny from beginning to end), her voice is fascinating and it invades the theater with softness and warmth, like a big inner smile.

There is also this magnificent vision at the beginning of the performance. Four bodies float in space in diverse positions. But what we thought we saw isn't what we saw, and a change of lighting lets the magnificent and simple decor of strung ropes appear, revealing the reality. Vandekeybus thus leads us on a fascinating voyage between dream and reality, night and day, gestes and words. Everything transforms itself little by little. Actors, dancers and spectators watch differently, listen differently, move differently. The lighting is superb and creates, with the decor, a multitude of images which push, complete, or contradict each other and participate in this sensory and sensual voyage on which Vandekeybus, who knows how to touch the depths of our body and soul, invites us. One is amazed by the sound of a plastic bag which rolls along the floor, one feels more than ever the power of Peter Vermeersch's music which pushes our bodies toward the dance. And even if thought is stronger than instinct, ordering us to stay calmly seated, it wouldn't be astonishing to one day see the audience rise and dance together with this formidable team which radiates well-being at the end of this *première*. That would certainly be one of the best tributes that the audience could pay to this piece which overflows with magnificent images and strong emotions.

Jean-Marie Wynants