

Selection from the reviews of *Nightshade*

CUTTING EDGE (Nimfa Tegenbos)

A world set in the twilight zone between being and semblance is here staged in forms whose approach ranges from critical, through gentle and tender, to comical and conceptual. It is the creator that makes his mark on each piece rather than the dancer's own expression.

Sometimes predictable, at others revealingly intimate. ... The successive acts show various aspects of the true striptease: seduction, torment, deceit, camouflage. Their creators look into the dancers' minds, while the dancers themselves are expected to communicate with their bodies. In *Nightshade* the duality is disentangled, and the counter-world goes the full monty.

RADIO 1 – NEON (Pol Arias)

... It comes as no surprise that Victoria should come up with this sort of production. In recent years it has been exploring the boundaries of theatre by pushing theatre-makers in directions they are not used to. This is the reason behind the request to seven choreographers and directors to establish a link between the striptease act and art. ... It must be said that the acts directed by Alain Platel and Caterina Sagna are the most interesting. In both cases the main accent is an intense sensitivity while the element of voyeurism nevertheless remains the focus. The seven dance and theatre pieces are unequal in quality and inspiration, but that is what makes the whole show interesting.

KNACK

The virtue of this production is that it shows the two sides of striptease: an external appearance and an inner reaction, which the choreographers have polarised into the body, the seducer, and the mind, which resists.

The best moments are those where Alain Platel approaches the better, meaning not explicit, striptease act, performed by Caroline Lemaire, to the tones of a kitsch *Je t'aime moi non plus* (***) , and the piece choreographed by Caterina Sagna that follows it, in which a girl, Sky Van der Hoek, is plucked from the audience. The two pieces go together perfectly. In the second the girl shows both the compulsion and the curiosity like a Lolita exploring Platel's stage set. The mind resists, but the pink socks are ultimately removed (***) .

DE MORGEN (Pieter T'Jonck)

The pieces by Vera Mantero, Caterina Sagna and Claudia Triozzi ensure the evening is a success. Mantero unearthed Delphine Clairet, a corpulent Parisian stripper who concentrates on burlesque striptease. Her chat with the audience un.masks almost in passing all the

platitudes concerning sex, pleasure and perversion. What remains is the question of what, for all the release it offers, we are actually seeking in this ritual. Sagna shows what Mantero sometimes suggests: underlying stripping there is a form of symbolic violence. In Sagna's piece this is taken literally when the girl-child Sky Van der Hoek is pulled onto the stage to bare herself. She only succeeds when she is beheaded by the stage curtains. Beheaded, undressed, dehumanised? Finally, Triozzi shows a woman in a mirror against a background of evocative lines and marks. The images dissolve so much into one another that you hardly know what you are seeing. This seems to be the ultimate truth of a strip act: even when you have seen everything, you still have not seen 'it'.

DE STANDAARD (Geert Sels)

Although each of the seven acts in *Nightshade* ends in a striptease, as a whole it looks like art. The choreographers have explored every parameter of the criterion 'seduction' and have forced the spectator to see things in a new way.

...

In his choreography Alain Platel gives full emphasis to all the clichés. He does not set Caroline Lemaire against any old red background, but the most demonic red imaginable. The song *Je t'aime moi non plus*, with its smooth lounge bar beat is no longer even sultry. But her introverted gaze and fado-like sadness show how sensual and distinguished the better striptease can be.

After this, Caterina Sagna brings on a dancer with an almost childish presence. The stripper's intention of seducing the audience is here twisted into its opposite. Sky Van der Hoek exudes the compulsion which there may well be in many a cabaret but which during the show remains in the wings. She stands on stage, her innocence defiled, menaced by a house curtain that crushes her, drowned out by the Emanon Ensemble.