



dancers writing

"I' is only a convenient term for somebody who has no real being. Lies will flow from my lips, but there may perhaps be some truth mixed up with them; it is for you to seek out this truth and to decide whether any part of it is worth keeping. If not, you will of course throw the whole of it into the waste-paper basket and forget all about it."

— Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*

speculative review: TIDE

I've had the pleasure of seeing Bára Sigfúsdóttir and Eivind Lønning's TIDE at Brussel's Beursschouwburg on the 12th of October, 2019. TIDE is coming to Stockholm's Dansenshus on the 22nd and 23rd of November. You can get your tickets [here](#).

As a way of introducing TIDE to those of you who haven't seen it yet, I would say that it is—in a very daring way—a classical dance improvisation, the likes of which one rarely, if ever, gets to see in theatres these days. A dancer and a musician with their musical instrument work side by side for... a certain amount of time. And then, before you know it, the piece is over. Which is not to say that the work is short, but that its time passes quickly—as ever time passes when consumed by curiosity and joy.



© Aëla Labbé

What is refreshing about TIDE is its focus, its brightness, its matter-of-factness, and its persistence, all of which, together, have a way of calming the mind of the observer, easing their breathing, and focusing their attention until what one is paying attention to becomes more than the initial focus, more than the initial brightness, more than the matter-of-factness, and more than persistence. The work has a way of burning through its admirable technical rigour (maybe: because of, or due to its technical rigour) and, much like a phoenix does when it rises from its own ashes (if you'll forgive the perhaps too obvious a metaphor), it has a way of reconciling with reality, achieving then the ultimate (you could say, and the ever-so-satisfying) act of transformation: by which the mundane becomes magical, abstract specific, stylised non-negotiable, detailed practical, and old: new.

What did come up for me in the watching of TIDE was the question of "instrument." There was something about the way in which the two performers' faces featured in the greater scheme of things that made me ask myself if it was, indeed, easier to carry your instrument in your hands in comparison to *being* it? Now, whether or not a musician identifies with their instrument is one thing we could discuss; the other being my point: the fact that a dancer has no choice but to identify with their body. Of course, one can always compartmentalise and I'm sure many dancers do—but I'd prefer to keep this discussion a technical and not a psychological one.

What I noticed was that Eivind's face engaged a higher degree of malleability; most noticeably, it could be a private face, a surprised face, a thinking face, a

REPORT THIS AD

lost face *and* a professional face, focused, calm, sober and drunk, analytical and taken by whatever was going on. Bára's face, in comparison, tended to remain within the realm of focused, calm—not unexpressive, but not expressive either—an un-distracting face, with eyes tracing the midline; the way eyes serving peripheral vision do. One could say that this might be unsurprising, that Eivind's eyes changed focus because he could and had to see Bára, as she danced; and that Bára's focus could and had to remain calm, as she was focusing on *sensing* and specifically *listening*: sensing, because where the information comes from, sensing the body, and listening to the musician she was working with.



© Nanna Dis

And then Eivind places the bell of his trumpet on Bára's back, and Bára smiles, surprised; looks back at Eivind, then turns her face forward towards the public, staring straight at us. For a split second her face *is* every emotion, every thought; ranging from distracted and embarrassed to suppressing laughter. It is joy, it is relief, it is past and future competing with the present for all of our attention. It is all that, everything and more, and then—it is gone, but not forgotten in and by the avalanche of sound and movement that follows.

In this transformation I've seen Bára's body become two bodies, so to speak, both a professional body and a private body, a living contradiction, active and online at the same time. Two bodies alive as one: neither a priority, neither assumed, neither in charge. Neither an instrument of the other, and yet: both at play.

In the greater scheme of things, from this point on I could see Bára and Bára and Eivind and trumpet in a resonant and sensitive partnership, all four seeing and hearing, all four following and leading, responding and calling, all at the same time. My questioning the “instrument” continues, now informed by TIDE’s achievement in working this classical format into postmodern time: a time of perspective, of negotiation, and debate; a time of power, but power sensitive and malleable, responsive and responsible, a power that is given and is taken, by woman, man, object, and that which we once saw and cannot see again.

written by pavleheidler, oct 2019