

'Jan Martens, RULE OF THREE - an intimate storm', Evelyn Bauer, *Cutting Edge*, 30 September 2017. ****

Jan Martens, 'Rule of Three' ****

An intimate storm



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Jan Martens likes people. He likes to show them in all their flaws and peculiarities, and he sets to work intelligently with their scars and doubts. In 'The Common People' he filled the stage with ordinary people who first meet on stage. In 'Rule of Three' Martens has opted for three artists who throw their cocky personalities into the battle convincingly. Martens' new show is again about individuals seeking a place for themselves in a hectic world, but this time the performance relies on brute force. And it sure packs a punch.

For 'Rule of Three' Martens chose to work with the live music of drummer and electro artist NAH and that was an excellent choice. Like the three dancers, the musician is an artist with a very distinct voice. NAH is at home both with the beats of underground nightclubs and with metal and jazz, and he knows exactly how to create an eclectic society with his sets. He uses the relief in his score to give shape to the stage, supported by projected texts that suggest fragmented storylines. The show demands some brainwork from the spectator to create a context, but also lends itself well to simply leaning back and letting yourself be overwhelmed.

The scenes of Martens' triptych flow into one another organically. The dancers contribute impulses for a story, a chapter, a memory, and in doing so they go through an evolution. They open the play with downcast faces and slavishly follow NAH's rapid rhythms with their tense movements. However, the dancers are very good at dealing in doses. The performance races along before slowing down again, while the three distinct figures increasingly break loose and at the same time grow towards one another.

Martens has also composed his performance intelligently. The choreographer has well understood the principle of the rule of three. If two dancers share the stage you are inevitably going to compare them, but if you place three performers side by side, you let them mirror one another and influence one another. Julien Josse, Courtney May Robertson and Steven Michel are each in themselves unique types, but they know how to create a cohesive performance by adopting each other's movements and colouring them in differently.

In 'Rule of Three' Martens opens up registers. His dancers are each strong characters with very distinct movement languages. They prove themselves to be as lyrical and comical as raw and tempestuous. Together with NAH's eccentric musical constructions, Martens' dancers create a world in which people fight for originality and individuality while at the same time they yearn for peace and quiet and a sense of belonging. This performance is impressive in its intimacy. That could be all too melancholy and transparent, but in Martens it is above all incredibly beautiful.

Evelyne Bauer

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