

De Morgen, 3 August 2011

Stijn Dierckx

The second pearl on the string is a pocket-sized dance production.

Half an hour of beautiful body aesthetics in two square metres of space. But this performance also has something to say, as its evocative title – *a small guide on how to treat your lifetime companion* – suggests.

With Steefka Zijlstra, maker Jan Martens dances a *histoire d’amour*, from the fragile beginnings to the mournful end.

Two people are ready.

Fascinated by one another’s appearance, they are caught up in an intimate game of magnetic attraction. In the eruption that follows, there is no reason to hang about. They discard their clothes like ballast from a hot air balloon: these two simply must take off, and fast. Youth cuts loose to the rousing scream of The White Stripes’ ‘Broken Bricks’. A wild, pointed mating dance, with arms raised and lowered, quickly moves on to the real action. Abrupt pauses in the music reveal their synchronized panting. Then we go back and start all over again.

Two bodies doing their thing. Never vulgar – on the contrary. Only after the confrontational, uncompromising ritual is there room to explore the other. Trust, tenderness – even true love – all seem to want to get involved in the story. The hand of coach Peter Seynaeve (*director of theatre company JAN, SD*) is clearly felt in Martens’ performance.

Intimacy reveals itself in your underwear, here too resulting in appealing vulnerability and pure white simplicity, stripped of anything superfluous.

In crystal clear language, Jan Martens and Steefka Zijlstra show five key moments in a relationship.

*A small guide...* is a successful essay in the dance of experience and sensitive storytelling.

Even the most astounded dance novice would have to agree: this is a production that gets the better of you all along the line.