

DANCE REVIEW

‘Rule of Three’: a plea for authenticity

Choreographer Jan Martens shakes off the neuroses



Harmony, respect and sensitivity emerge in the silence. © Joeri Thiry

Three dancers under the spell of a maniacal drummer. That’s all choreographer Jan Martens needs to make an impressive dance performance that time after time incites reflection.

For *Rule of Three*, Martens enlisted the help of drummer and electronica musician NAH. Sweating above his instruments, he reveals himself to be a tormentor who holds the dancers in an iron grip. From short, explosive scenes that follow one another staccato, the show moves to sustained tableaux in which repetitive actions flow into one another almost

imperceptibly. The recurrent figure of the triangle can be read symbolically: three points that are connected to one another but can't touch each other.

The dancers share a refined movement language but are at the same time imprisoned in their own manic actions. Physical contact is avoided; they move around each other. It is distance that reigns between individuals who are locked in themselves.

You soon get the impression that they are each building something individually. The compulsive, almost neurotic construction of an identity of one's own, supported by pounding rhythms, shows you a factory emerge on stage. A machine that cobbles together personalities which are never finished, however, which are never completed but are always pushed in new directions.



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To the compelling tempo of heavy sledgehammer blows, the dancers jump in awkward poses that recall Chinese calligraphy. The body that writes itself in an alphabet of fantastically stylized characters. And by extension the human being that is trying to write its own story and in doing so goes to extremes. It seems headed for havoc, until NAH, with one last thunderbolt, considers it done and staggers off the stage, exhausted.

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The devil has quit the scene and leaves a dazed silence behind him. The contrast couldn't be bigger: the dancers are suddenly naked, still panting but nevertheless relaxed. They have shaken off the neuroses and discover a new, unexplored freedom. The distant individuality of the first part is traded for intimacy, careful physical contact and tenderness. The dancers grow towards one another, seek silent compositions of bodies that fit into one another. Harmony, respect and sensitivity emerge in the silence.

With this choreography Martens reflects on the rhythms that dominate our lives. Without wagging a pedantic finger, he shows us how we turn life into a bruising battle and he offers us an alternative. He picks holes in our anxious attempts to be 'someone', and argues strongly in favour of authenticity. A breath of fresh air.