

DANCE A concert? A wild party? A YouTube choreography? A collective reading session? Jan Martens' new show is simply all of the above.

What! A! Show! ****

Rule of Three

By: Jan Martens/Grip and NAH

With: Julien Josse, Steven Michel and Courtney May Robertson

Seen on 28/9 in deSingel. On tour in Flanders until late April 2018.



The interplay between dance and music is blistering. © Phile Deprez

Rule of Three strikes like a, hmm, drum. The lights go out. Silence before the storm. Suddenly a resounding drumbeat jolts you awake. A blue flash blinds the eye. Another bang. Another flash. And another, and another. Drummer and music producer NAH enters with a bang. Over the coming hour the American will use his drums to pound and to soothe. He conjures the most addictive samples from his computer and switches effortlessly between noise and minimal electronica. What an attitude. Fuck your neighbours and that cramped theatre seat; your body can't sit still.

The dancers Steven Michel, Julien Josse and the lively Courtney Robertson also let themselves be guided by the unremitting drum violence.

In ultrashort scenes, always interrupted by a blackout, they move to a tense rhythm, then with spellbinding repetition. The vocabulary brings to mind social dances and kitschy nightclub moves from the 1970s (or at least what we imagine them to have been), but also Bauhaus puppets, Meyerhold's biomechanics and hip-hop's *locking*. In themselves the dance phrases are not always really exciting, but then again it's about their effect rather. They put you in a trance, driven by the loud music, the sustained repetition, and the bright light show.

The contrast with Jan Martens' previous production couldn't be greater. Where *The Common People* was disarming thanks to a series of intimate duets between amateurs, Martens here shows his punk vibe. Raw power and vulnerability have always circled one another like magnets in his oeuvre.

Rule of Three is a 'contemporary' performance in every respect, an eclectic hyperdance that swipes from *throat dance* to *zombie spiral* – like on the better YouTube channels. Martens captures the mindset of our hectic age in the blistering interplay between dance and music: routinely numbed by ever-changing stimuli, fragmentary, zapping, lacking in concentration.

The choreographer sometimes interrupts that rapid rhythm with fragments from story collections by Lydia Davis which you can take your time reading on a large screen. It creates at once a different kind of thinking and experiencing: it is not the impulsive body that reacts, but the mind. It is a pity that Martens doesn't fully exploit that literary trail and heighten the contrast with the sensory overexcitement. But what a hypnotic musical trip this *Rule of Three* remains.

Charlotte De Somviele