

The Dog Days Are Over

ANNETTE EMBRECHTS – 24/03/14

Jan Martens conjures a hypnotizing choreography out of just jumping power and geometry.

The Dog Days Are Over by Jan Martens & ICKamsterdam. 20/3, Frascati, Amsterdam; Tour: janmartens.com and ickamsterdam.com

Eight pairs of shoes are waiting on stage. That is all the dancers need for The Dog Days Are Over from the young choreographer Jan Martens (29), who is a guest choreographer at ICKamsterdam and DansBrabant. Yes, also their breathing and their stamina. They have to be very careful with these qualities during the 65 minutes that are build up with great precision. They wear a minimum amount of clothes: sports pants, bikini top, a shining legging. These have theatrical colors: neon, gold or a leopard print. Everything else is basic. With these eight dancers with sport shoes on – four women, four men – Jan Martens conjures a hypnotizing choreography out of just jumping power and geometry. After the eight have started with small resilient jumps, they won't stop anymore. They bounce across imaginary lines, move away from each other, form a star, a circle, a diagonal line, a graph, a straight line. They seem to communicate a morse code with their feet; the soles of the shoes squeaking on the floor. Every once in a while someone shouts 'Count!'; after which the dancers check their synchrony by counting out loud. Breathless you look at the slightly changing patterns. Every time you

think they have tried everything, Martens has thought of a turn: rocking bums, extremely heavy splits on the spot, fade-outs or a finely articulated piece by Bach on the guitar, popping out of the speakers. The last mentioned is the only music that he uses in The Dog Days Are Over. But the performance lacks nothing of this kind. Cherish Menzo, Nelle Hens, Piet Defrancq, Kimmy Ligtoet, Steven Michel, Julien Josse, Laura Vanborm and Naomi Gibson slide controlled across the stage like wound up springs. A trick? No, it is too intense, intoxicating and refined for that. Dance? Most certainly: Martens proves to be a worthy successor of choreographer Krisztina de Châtel, queen of the minimal dance. She looked at the performance on Thursday with approval. Where De Châtel has eyes for the visual and esthetical power of repetitive movement, Martens, winner of the Prins Bernhard Cultuurfonds Dansprijs 2013, silently posits political questions with his work. Is it humane to drill eight dancers to become human springs? The famous American photographer Philippe Halsman once said: 'When you ask a person to jump, his attention is mostly directed toward the act of jumping and the mask falls so that the real person appears.' Whoever jumps, is present in current space and time. When up in the air, there is no future, no past, no hidden agenda (except for when the jump is deadly of course). Or as sung by Florence & The Machine in the song The Dog Days Are Over (which is not used in the performance): 'Leave all your love and longing behind, you can't carry it with you if you want to survive.' Carry nothing but yourself. And then up in the air. To survive on the power of jumping. Magnificent.

