

Het Parool

Three dancers grapple with human anatomy

24.10.2017

by Fritz de Jong



At times the dancers rely intimately on each other, while at others they are very distant.

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RULE OF THREE

By: GRIP

Seen: 29/9, Antwerp

Showing: 24 and 25/10, Stadsschouwburg

Bang! Clap! Whack! With a few apt drumbeats in the dark, the drummer NAH jolts everyone and everything awake. This marks the start of a whirling series of dance numbers, in which two men and a woman explore countless variations on the 'rule of three': a writer's theory according to which stories are more exciting, more thrilling or more lively when characters are introduced in sets of threes. Whether that really is the case will remain an open question for some time. But the fact is that Steven Michel, Julien Josse and Courtney May Robertson form an intriguing trio.

Restlessness

Driven by NAH's beats – NAH is the stage name of the American producer, drummer and electronica specialist Michael Kuhn – the three dancers move around one another. At times relying intimately on each other, and then, by contrast, distant and alone.

Alternating between aggressive electro-punk, relaxed lounge and everything in-between, NAH's music leads the first part of the show. The dancers seem to be constantly running after the facts as they try to keep pace with the drums and samplers.

The harder they try, the more stress their efforts seem to produce. The dancers' growing restlessness in turn seems to irritate the drummer – to the extent that after an hour he throws down his drum sticks and storms off the stage. In doing so he makes way for a finale that is a contrast in all respects. But more about that in a minute.

Rule of Three was made by the Flemish choreographer Jan Martens who has also collaborated with the Amsterdam collective ICK, but who made this show with his Antwerp company, GRIP. In 2014 Martens made an impression with *The Dog Days Are Over*, a minimalist fight to the finish in which he had the dancers jump up and down endlessly: a hypnotic spectacle about the problematic aspects of discipline and following orders.

In *Rule of Three*, Martens lets himself be guided by the fact that the perception of more and more people is becoming increasingly fragmented. That is what we see reflected in the first part in the hectic interaction between rhythm and movement.

A bit too intimate

However, Martens does not linger in the observation that we live in a fragmented world. Once NAH has left the stage, he also offers a shamelessly romantic and utopian, not to say hippyish alternative.

In total silence and bathed in light that encompasses both the stage and the audience, the dancers undress. While they expose themselves physically, the audience reveals its discomfort.

The poses that the dancers take at various places on the stage are in fact a bit too intimate and delicate. While one scene seems to have been inspired by Manet's *Le déjeuner sur l'herbe*, other positions rather seem to be the result of a grappling with human anatomy.

These three naked dancers, pastoral, somewhat naive and apparently completely unstressed: in all its quiet simplicity, it yields a finale that hits just as hard as those drumbeats at the start.