

"Dans: Opzij opzij opzij?," Els Van Steenberghe, *Knack Focus*, 01.04.2014.
<http://focus.knack.be/entertainment/podium/dans-opzij-opzij-opzij/article-opinion-177947.html>



Wednesday, April 1st, 2014.

The Play: The dog days are over

Company: Jan Martens

In one sentence: Literally and figuratively speaking a breath taking performance that transforms you into an embarrassed voyeur of voluntary suffering. At the same time the jumping is a clear statement about the raging fuss with which we rush through a more and more superficial life.

Highlight: While seven dancers are jumping from left to right and from the back to the front swinging their arms, the eighth dancer retreats, breathing heavily. At this moment the performance turns into a true battle of survival, during which the eight dancers support each other until the end moaning, counting out loud and panting.

Score: ****

An hour of continuous jumping, counting and courageously jumping different rhythms, heights, formations instead of just normal jumping. Only a few would want and be able to do what the eight dancers of Jan Martens did on stage.

Martens created furore with heartbreakingly beautiful and intimate duets like Victor and Sweat Baby Sweat, but now transforms his sober dance idiom into a rat race in which we all come together on the scene to spin. He dressed his eight dancers in bright sports clothes and dropped them on a floor divided by crosses and lines. It is as if you're looking at the structure of a computer screen up close. That is how closely Martens zooms in at the existential rat race in which everything needs to go faster, better, shorter and more intense. Until we burn ourselves, literally, on a burn-out.

The dancers put on their colourful socks and shoes carefully, stand in a line and look at the audience. *What do you want from us?*, is what they seem to be thinking. Slowly they start to jump, only to stop after more than 60 minutes. It is truly astonishing to see how the dancers won't give up on this fight with dance. And sometimes they crash. In this crash you recognise the dancer in a human being, but you also recognise yourself. Everyone runs after reality by trying to do as many things right as possible, but noticing that there is no time to do this and still keep on doing it, to get home and sit on the sofa staring ahead in great exhaustion. There is not even some time for intimacy.

It makes *The dog days are over* into a breath taking performance that transforms you into an embarrassed voyeur of voluntary suffering. And at the same time the jumping is a clear statement about the raging fuss with which we rush through a more and more superficial life. Is there an alternate solution? The alternative is hinted at during two moments of the performance, when Martens (finally) gives a more ingenious role to the lightning. By dimming the lights, you start looking at the shadows of the dancers that are trying their best and at the end a floodlight searches for the faces of the exhausted people on stage. Suddenly you're face to face with yourself. Too much and too long you've been jumping from one place to another to end up realising that all this jumping is pretty but in the end also very unnecessary. Or isn't it?

Els Van Steenberghe.