

## CRITIQUE

### **Charleroi Danse Michèle Noiret's *Le Chant des ruines*. The biennale in Wallonia opens with a new dance-cinema dialogue that questions the 21st century.**

In a world ravaged by cataclysm, what place is left for intimacy? *Le Chant des ruines*, a new creation by Michèle Noiret, is interested in a situation at breaking point, a point of no return. The end of certainty. Ties are forged between the protagonists in unstable landscapes and situations, as if in disintegration.

Are these ruins in formation the “ruins of Europe” of Heiner Müller’s *Hamletmaschine*? Or do they herald the 21st century, as it looks like developing, and so with every day a little more disastrous? For the Berlin playwright, from *Hamletmaschine* to *Quartet*, postapocalyptic landscapes are a kind of permanent hell. For Noiret, desolation is a consensual state, a parallel world of multiple faces in which the bodies sing of both tragedy and the everyday, and one seems to follow from the other.

### **Pictures and power / The power of the image**

The chassé-croisé begins on a floor covered with sheets, tectonic plates perhaps. Or rafts. Soon the whole system is carried away in a whirlwind and rifts begin to open. As a camera looks on, the floor rips apart and the rafts sink. *Le Chant des ruines* sets its course through pictures. Without capsizing. Landscapes and bodies, filmed live, appear on a huge screen, which fills the whole of the back wall. And yet these visions seem to come from far away.

The eye of the spectator looks for the wire that connects the action on stage to the picture. It looks for the camera, without finding any. The link between the matter and its representation remains secret. The projections do not reproduce, they put into perspective and overwhelm the eyes. The sheets whirling under the feet of the dancers turn into a raging flood. Two entwined bodies metamorphose into a moving drawing. A pile of torn paper is transformed into an apocalyptic landscape.

Poetic and at the same time disturbing, this process builds a new relationship with reality, at the very heart of the piece. The processing of the pictures, secretly taken from the stage, introduces a spectacular uncertainty about the status of what is being shown. These pictures are beautiful, breathtaking. At the same time, they are worrying, as they show the infinite possibilities of manipulation for all to see.

### **Surviving the 21th century**

Of which ruins is this piece the song? Here, Michèle Noiret addresses the disappearance of certainty and the vestiges of our relationship with the real, by means of some fresh thinking on the role of pictures in the 21st century. Because, if the 20th century was one of pictures relating reality (experimenting some differences), the 21st century is one of pictures creating the real. With Noiret, a fortiori, the pictures create the dance, since the Brussels-based choreographer started to develop her “dance-cinema”, a vision of the creation that evolves with its era. (continued on the next page)

This century, which we are already a fifth of the way through, where is it taking us? Other developments are added to the upheaval of the relationship with reality, with direct repercussions for everyone, both dramatic and physical. Which is why, in some scenes, the dancers wear masks, as if to protect themselves from pollution, viruses or simply from the other... And Sara Tan, who we know from her roles in Kubilaï Khan's creations, addresses us, not through the intermediary of the screen, to praise a guide to surviving in the 21st century or ask about our willingness to become a perfect citizen of the 21st century. Funny, because they are handled like a YouTube tutorial or a commercial, these speeches are the evening's running gag.

### **Being real in the 21st century**

The surprise is that in spite of the scenic power of the giant screen, the dance manages not to be swallowed up in the pictures. That is not as easy as it might seem. In a dance piece, danger threatens as soon as the camera enters the live action. But the art of Michèle Noiret in working on the opposition between the stage and the screen creates a living connection that never flags. With each sequence shown live, the reading of the pictures starts from the dance and creates surprise, thanks to the choreographic quality and the captivating presence of five performers who assert strong identities, responding to a limpid, precise and transparent choreography.

As a hidden camera looks on, *Le Chant des ruines* portrays the debates of men, the solitude of women, a community of fortune, intimate meetings, secret dreams of glory and fame and the interior doubts that assail us. "Are you real? Am I real?", wonders the YouTuber, like an artificial intelligence that becomes conscious of itself. *Le Chant des ruines* ends on a forest in flames, shot so close up that, here too, one questions the authenticity of the pictures. One thing at least is certain: this dance-picture polyphony is a real success.



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