

# Demandez le programme, February 2020

## Didier Béclard

### REVIEW

#### The glare of embers

**Created for the opening of the Biennale de Charleroi danse in October, *Le Chant des ruines* immerses us in a deeply human journey. Sound, atmosphere and videos highlight the precise choreography, polished down to the last carat, of Michèle Noiret.**

As the audience take their seats, the dancers, two women, three men, one by one take possession of the stage. They wait on a pared-down set consisting of heaps of cardboard and carpet, and observe the spectators. One female dancer begins a succession of movements in search of balance. Snatches of *The Blue Danube* emerge, a radiophonic voice holds forth on the foundation of society. In turn, the other female dancer begins to move, standing, on the floor. Other snatches of an Amy Winehouse song come to the fore, before making way for the noise of traffic or waves. Another voice, in English, imposes itself on the sound layer. One of the male dancers, stretched out on the floor together with his two auxiliaries, launches into a kind of lip synching. All three converse before rising and confronting each other in a collective dance in the style of *West Side Story*.

The Singaporean dancer (Sara Tan) declaims in English (the translation is shown on the screen) the recommendations of a guide for surviving the 21st century. They all take up position around the large sheets arranged on the floor, moving them like drifting continents or tectonic plates that move, smash together, stack one on top of the other. They creep under these moving surfaces while micro-cameras take close ups of the details of their physique, the structure of the materials, projected on the back wall.

Breaths are heard, interference. The movements become more sweeping, faster, the sheets turn into mechanical diggers, clearing the stage of the heaps of cardboard, which are hurled at the dancers' faces, the sheets made wall quickly fall apart, before an inferno glows red on the stage. Panic, the dancers scatter and run in all directions, trying to escape the chaos. The exodus has begun.

The 21st century is definitely one of the image, which, while claiming to reproduce reality, creates an inexorable distance from it. Certainties are undermined and their disappearance drives the individuals on an erratic journey with aspects of dystopia (a story that unfurls in an imaginary society in which it is hard, even impossible to live), a chassé-croisé through unstable, ephemeral, volatile situations, on a quest for reality, a reality, among the ruins.

The choreographer Michèle Noiret has already shown her capacity for using sound and vision technologies in an inventive and totally masterly way. In this regard, *Hors-Champ* (2013) is a founding work of "cinema-dance" designed to be presented as a "theatrical feature". Here, specifically, the filmed image adds depth to the stage, brings together the space, the dancers, the materials, the textures, the set. But the image is never the simple reflection of reality.

Disproportionate, inverted, moved forward, she dreams an undreamed-of universe, unreal, but one that touches the imagination. The projections do not reproduce reality, they work it, sublimate it, transform it. In the midst of perspectives that follow each other up, points of view that pile up, the spectator scrutinises the link with what happens on the stage, looks for the invisible camera without finding it. Uncertainty wins.

If the images create astonishment, they do not overshadow the choreographic quality - even the movement of the sheets seems minutely written - of this piece admirably served by the five dancers (Alexandre Bachelard, Harris Gkekas, Liza Penkova, Sara Tan and Denis Terrasse). Supported by the video creations of Vincent Pinckaers and the sound universe developed by Todor Todoroff, Michèle Noiret combines languages to create scenes, emotions, fascinating atmospheres.