



Didier Béclard, “In a great middle of nowhere”, Demandez le programme,
6th February 2020, <http://www.demandezleprogramme.be/Every-Direction-is-North?fbclid=IwAR3Id5LqSeTvnEhLOlybuTDFPj1xBe2L5NINug5qIBy-S6mDBG3NA09FDLI#critique>

In a great middle of nowhere

Even though “Every Direction is North” opened in 2016, its Belgian premiere was today. Well known in Russia, choreographer Karine Ponties took the opportunity to work with seven dancers from the Moscow Ballet, who deliver this energetic piece with mastery.

A man treads a section of the stage, his head covered with a wooden cube. He mutters incantations, something like the guttural songs of Buddhist monks, before attempting to free himself from the box's hold. Six other men join him, also carrying a box. Except for one who drags it a bit further away. Until he comes back, and takes another box from another of his (un)fortunate comrades... The boxes become stakes. Later, set pieces.

The seven men gather, push one another, bump and lean against each other. They all seem to be in a hurry to go somewhere. The light square on the ground in which they are caged gets smaller and smaller, they bother each other more and more. Then the square disappears, the space opens up and spreads out. Light and dancers now occupy the entire stage, revealing an unsuspected dimension: a cold and infinite landscape. They all meet in a space, having come from different horizons, everybody looking for a path of their own. Group movements are punctuated by individual solos where each performer oozes something specific about themselves, while weaving a connection with this fragmented universe. Each performance is like a slice of life.

Beginning somehow in calmness, this search for meaning and landmarks becomes more and more energetic as bodies throw themselves into the world, into the group, as they fight, committed as they are, to keep their place, with tenacity but never with violence. The pace picks up before softly landing back into the tight light square, whose angles imperceptibly smooth themselves into a circle, a symbol of harmony.

Franco-Belgian choreographer Karine Ponties had already collaborated with Russian companies, most notably with company Dialogue Dance from Kostrom, which led to the creation of “Pastime Paradise,” nominated in 2015 for a Golden Mask for the Best Russian Contemporary Dance Piece. In 2016, Elena Tupyseva who had brought her to Kostroma, became director of the Balet Moskva and invited Karine Ponties to create this piece with the contemporary section of the Moscow Ballet. This collaboration is “Every Direction is North” which was awarded the Golden Mask in 2017.

The choreographer didn't miss the chance to work with seven dancers who impress with their precision, their physical strength and their mastery in the art of dancing. “With this company of dancers, explains Karine Ponties, I feel like there is the possibility to go far into the body. At any moment, their gestures are like challenges as in of themselves. They embody what I look for in creating pieces: rigor, relentlessness and abandonment.”

Didier Béclard

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