



Nicolas VILLODRE, « *Lichens* by Karine Ponties », Danser Canal Historique, 10th March 2020,

<https://dansercanalthistorique.fr/?q=content/lichens-de-karine-ponties>



« *Lichens* » by Karine Ponties

Before touring in France and, specifically at Théâtre Jean Vilar de Vitry, choreographer Karine Ponties presented a new piece called *Lichens* at Les Brigittines in Brussels.

In sixty minutes, Béjart's former student offered us a show fusing dance, pantomime and circus, proving that, like the Marseille choreographer, she has a sense of theatre and a taste for the 7th Art. Her performers, Ares D'Angelo, Eric Domeneghetti, Vera Gorbacheva, Liesbeth Kiebooms, Nilda Martinez and Jaro Vinarsky, come from all sorts of disciplines and backgrounds. Cinema, that for Karine represents “the magic of movement,” shares its etymology with choreography – the annotation of gesture. This piece draws inspiration from *The Tale of Tales*, a unique animation film created in 1979 by Russian director Yuri Norstein. The characters embodied by the dancers initially reveal only bits of their bodies, and then keep coming back, in solos, duos, or more rarely, ensemble moments, which doesn't mean together or in unison, but organically present at several levels, as if in a film, where the stage's full depth is used like on camera.



"Lichens" - Karine Ponties © Andrea Messana

This wordless tale is populated by strange creatures. The set, a foggy, surreal atmosphere. Not any less enigmatic. Underlined by a dominating darkness, together with a lamp that keeps gliding down the cable it hangs from, and touches of lighting, the result of Guillaume

Toussaint Fromentin's dramaturgical position. David Monceau's electro-acoustic composition gives a nice pace to the whole piece, and two traditional Russian tangos bring the end of the show to full life. Norstein's film bleeds onto the choreography itself, with abstract gestures that quickly lead into a sort of complete bizarreness. A soft insanity permeates into the dancers who, at times, give in to a trance, or even, a chorea.

Certain encounters are truly surrealist. For instance, at the beginning of the show, when a banquet table appears, dressed with a tablecloth from which body parts emerge – a head, an arm, a leg: anatomy metonymy. Or when a frog-man enters from above, and, impeded in his walk once he lands with his huge flippers, evokes Meliès's marked *decoufliers*. The moment when a man pedals into emptiness from a firefighter pole or Chinese mast fully justifies its purchase. Same thing for the recurrent use of black or backlit black backgrounds that allow dancers to appear and disappear without wasting time.



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Karine Ponties's dance can be defined contemporary, but more than that, it gives the feeling of in-temporality or a-temporality - “out of time” says the choreographer of her own work, “unfashionable” adds her coproducer Nathalie Huerta. Human condition is illustrated by the many facets, shapes and disguises that each dancer embodies, fully committed, feisty in their acrobatics, contortions, magic, almost like in an open-door production. And in their dance, of course. They pull laughs and smiles from us, even in their absurdity. Eventually, we rekindle ourselves with the poetic dimension of surrealism through the metaphor of the Minotaur, represented here by a tall horned stuffed animal, the most harmless of figures.

Nicolas Villodre

Seen on March 5th at Les Brigittines in Brussels

Presented on March 13th at Théâtre Jean Vilar de Vitry-sur-Seine (France).