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Artner Szilvia Sisso: A pearl for the discos

ANNAMARI KESKINEN: SWAN SONG AND CSABA MOLNÁR: SHOWCASE – SUB.LAB.PRO
THE ENSEMBLE PROGRAM, TRAFÓ

2023-02-16

At the SUB.LAB.PRO The Ensemble Program *Ruby* (*Rubin*) double evening in December, the choreographies of Csaba Molnár and the Finnish Annamari Keskinen stood in interesting contrast to each other, but both explored new, exciting paths. We could barely take it in.



Photos: Gergely Ofner

SUB.LAB.PRO, a creative dance platform that is essentially a laboratory in which company operations are modeled, was founded by choreographers Jenna Jalonen and Péter Juhász, who are of Finnish origin but have been living and creating in Hungary for over 10 years. The international cast of performers (in this case all women) selected during a professional casting participate in a six-month training course enriched with trainings, workshops, and professional performances, and receive individual mentoring. The team thus forged then works with internationally renowned choreographers – not as master and student, but in a partnership, almost as a creative partner – and as a result of their joint work, they present finished productions.

The *Ruby* evening is named after – and also a metaphor for – the gemstone, whose pure, transparent base material is corundum, which only becomes colorful under the influence of certain impurities and oxygen. In other words, it becomes a true gemstone only after some kind of destructive intervention, which could even be a common synopsis of the two choreographies just presented. The “base material” is the ten dancers, the “destructive” effect is the two choreographers, and the end result is two dance constructions made of emotions and tense with passions, which feature special characters, operate with post-apocalyptic images or even irony.

The first part, *Swan Song*, is choreographed by Annamari Keskinen, one of the founders and artistic director of the Thar Be Dragons dance company from Helsinki. She is a true Finnish explorer and spiritual polar explorer. Her performance examines how deep and ambiguous mental and emotional states can be made validly visible on the dance stage. Her figures are parables of emotions, in which the ten dancers are present not as a dance troupe at all, but



with their own faces and individual auras. We must constantly keep an eye on them, both together and individually, so that we, the audience, can connect with them and push the boundaries of our imagination. We have talked so much about openness and receptive courage, so it is time for us to test ourselves in the experiment. At first, it is not easy for us, just like the dancers, who build and recreate themselves from vegetative movements and inarticulate sounds, as if they were playing out death and rebirth during a tribal ceremony. Only not in a grass skirt, painted mask and barefoot, but not in a tutu either, but in a miniskirt, tank top, tracksuit bottoms, in other words, in an urban way. The disturbing but familiar human voices, the noises, movements, the created music, the vibrations of the body and psyche come together beautifully into a magical space. You can bite into the atmosphere. I am reminded of *The City of Women*, *All About My Mother*, the female characters of my important films and readings, but also my own no less important stories. Memories, references, traumas, adventures, experiences, moods, smells, which I can hold on to and with which I can hear the song of the silent swan here and now.

Csaba Molnár has staged a performance with a completely different atmosphere, complex, comic-ironic, and boldly theatrical effects with the same dancers. The opening is already twisted: we are taken from the therapeutic, melancholic vision of *Swan Song* to a world turned upside down. Here, dance is not done, but talked about, and interestingly, this still becomes movement theater (as in Molnár's previous work with others, *game changer*). In an imaginary television studio, two unprepared reporters ask terribly amateurish questions about contemporary dance to the invited choreographer, who instead of casually walking out of the studio tries to make himself understood and answer normally, even though no one is interested. Yet everyone pretends as if everything is perfectly fine. The performers do not show off any special verbal skills, nor is there a need for them, and what they say nevertheless

provides the rhythm and melody for their movements. Then they actually dance, showing everything they have come to terms with during the six-week creative process with Csaba Molnár (and his assistant, choreographer Júlia Vavra) around the themes of playfulness, free self-expression, non-judgment and the dismantling of hierarchy. They generate physical and mental states in which their bodies (transform) with ease and skill.



Showcase – true to its title – presents a kind of offering in which performers try to sell themselves to us according to the marketing rules of our time. We can focus a little when we discover the current social-critical edge in the chaotic metal ballet taking place before us, or see ourselves in the mirror of a dancer's lonely scene. For example, the audience leans forward as one person at the sight of a gun coming onto the stage, and while we are trying to get over the bang, the props move from hand to hand and it is beautifully shown how a little power changes movement and behavior. The extended closing scene, the finale, is as if it were the previous casting itself. A post-screening, where we can carefully assess the characters, and the world is finally wide open. It would be great to write a portrait of each of them, as many as there are, Israeli, Belgian, Italian, French, Hungarian. Despite the identical movements and poses, like in a lame beauty contest, everyone stands out here, according to their own internal rules, character, personality, and character. And this is a real shame because there are not only classically trained dancers among them, but also athletes, acrobats, and performers from different urban dance styles. They have one thing in common: a passion for dance and a commitment to freedom. That's just good enough for us.

What? SUB.LAB.PRO The Ensemble Program: Ruby (Annamari Keskinen: Swan Song and Csaba Molnár: Showcase) Where? Trafó Who? Choreography: Annamari Keskinen, Csaba Molnár. Performers: Aggeliki Michalaki, Anna Fauro, Cecilia Weidacher, Coline Hemery, Eleonora Cirelli, Fanny Mansot, Inés Lopez, Manon Campion, Opal Gelman, Shaked Tadmor.

Founders, artistic directors, mentors of SUB.LAB.PRO The Ensemble Program: Jenna Jalonen, Péter Juhász.

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