

Reality escapes concepts in a dance group's dream

Factor **Harri Kuusisaari** · 2025-04-07



The tuba player can only get out a few puffs from his horn, as is easily the case with a musician performing in a dream.
© Kai Kuusisto

Surrealistic dreaminess is not new to the Helsinki Dance Company's repertoire, as **Carolyn Carlson** already introduced it into her works in the 1990s. But while those were thoroughly poetic and spontaneously fattening, in **Annamari Keskinen** and **Ryan Mason's** new work *Dreamer*, the world of sleep and the unconscious is the art of precise gestures.

The opening image is fascinating. Dancer **Justus Pienmunne** sits hunched on a fuchsia-tinted stage with a tuba in his lap. He seems to be trying to play it, but nothing comes out but gasps. I've had the same thing happen to me in my dreams sometimes, when I've had to play or sing something in public. Then the tuba player gets stuck next to the wall and stares into nothingness. At the same time, **Mikko Paloniemi** tries to tune the microphone and arrange the wires, but he can't do anything with his performance instrument either.

One level of Dreamer is these frozen in-between spaces, empty intentions where things take a different direction than intended. The subconscious takes over consciousness. The choreographer pair wants to break free from the shackles of



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consists of dark and rumbling, screeching sounds, which begin to change into a metal beat and then into a softer ambient again.

In contrast to the static, *Dreamer* is a violent physical action. The dancers roll on the ground, tremble as if in a stupor, and mosh. The anxiety is chaotic and comprehensive – a familiar lump for many of us. A person seeks refuge in another, which is expressed in the work's beautiful, intimate duets and trios.



Strange but still inevitable events follow one another in the dance piece *Dreamer*. © Kai Kuusisto

Eventually, **Pekka Louhio** gets frustrated with the microphone's muteness and starts twirling it in a rage like a lasso of a westerner. The whirring combines with the most violent sounds of the music. It has an even greater impact when **Inka Tiitinen** grabs the microphone and starts singing in her clear voice. It's like a message from the source of humanity and also wakes up the other dancers. The music turns into a spacey hum as **Saara Viikka's** cello emphasizes the human layer.

At the end, morning seems to be breaking, but it is not a sign of hope. The night still brings freedom – a theme familiar **from Wagner's** *Tristan und Isolde* .

William Iles' lighting design plays a key role in creating the captivating effect of the work. The fuchsia red changes from a gentle fantasy world to blue shadows and everyday tones. The work conveys a powerful experience that still cannot be put into words. That must have been the intention.

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