



Premiere of the dance choreographies "Anarchy of the body" at the Kassel Schauspielhaus leaves confusion

December 3, 2018, 9:00 a.m.

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They're abrasive to each other: (from left) Safet Mistele, Luca Ghedini, Alessia Ruffolo, Cree Barnett Williams, Alison Monquie Adnet, and Shafiki Ssegayai in dance director Johannes Wieland's piece "re-recreator." Photos: N. Klinger © -

Loss of control. Something that people often find difficult to bear. But also something that can feel like liberation. The dance theater premiere at the Schauspielhaus was titled "Anarchy of the Body."

Production "re-creator"

"It's about letting go," says Cree Barnett Williams at the end of "re-creator," the first piece of the double bill at the Kassel Schauspielhaus. She walks offstage alone, a wall separating her from the other eight dancers, whose movements we just saw and now hear.

Dance director Johannes Wieland allows for a physical and – as the dancers stare at the audience with wide-open eyes, as if transfixed by the world – a seemingly mental loss of control. But even as six large fans on the empty stage swirl the fog futuristically above the heads of the nine dancers, the sound

becomes faster, louder, and the movement more excessive – the expression and movement language don't seem as powerful as in Wieland's intense "Dawn."

This may be because, in this danced anarchy, the bodies are still under control down to the smallest detail. Every twitch, hysterical laughter, conversation, every exaggeration—simply every action on stage, reminiscent of drugged-up techno disco nights, shamanic dances, or whirling dervishes—requires body control. Not a single leg swerve seems to happen easily. The dancers are usually rough with each other—even when kissing. The movements are often fast, but also clearly articulated—clearly legible.

Yet, especially when it comes to the theme of anarchy, Wieland doesn't demand everything from the outstanding ensemble. As if recognizing this, he uses bare torsos – including women's – as if to reinforce it. This is no longer a provocation in contemporary dance. Unlike in Wieland's "The Rite of Spring," which featured stark naked dancers, it has less of an impact as a stylistic device here.

The most powerful scenes: When the music stops. Then, on the stage, lit like a film set, only the steps of the dancers, wearing shoes, set the rhythm in tap-dancing ecstasy.

Production "Egg"

At a more leisurely pace, choreographers Annamari Keskinen and Ryan Mason, both once audience favorites in the Kassel ensemble, let the dancers' bodies speak, creating poetic images beneath the Sputnik hovering above the stage. Cree Barnett Williams holds a carton of milk, from which the white liquid continuously flows onto the stage – her belly swells, and one hears the thrumming heartbeat of a fetus during the ultrasound scan. In Sputnik's orbit, not only the dancer can be seen, but also a man scarred by life (Yegor Vysotsky) sits stoically on a smoking chair (stage design: Matthieu Götz).

It's the unpredictability in this strangely familiar world-space that fascinates. The continuous running in the strobe light, in particular, has a captivating effect. Finally, the oriental-looking, colorful costumes (Evelyn Schönwald) evoke emotions that are hard to grasp – the dignity and beauty of the spirit in a changing, seemingly stumbling world. Perhaps. But even in the clever interplay of complex sensory impressions and expressive acting, the dance could have been more present. Not much seems logical in "Egg," leaving some audience members confused – also a form of anarchy. Long applause for a double loss of control.

Dancing were:

Alison Monique Adnet, Cree Barnett Williams, Dafni Krazoudi, Alessia Ruffolo, Morgan Bobrow-Williams, Luca Ghedini, Niv Melamed, Safet Mistelet, Shafiki Sseggayi.

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