



Misty worlds

Johannes Wieland, Annamari Keskinen /
Ryan Mason: Re-recreator, El (Anarchy of
the body)

Theater: State Theatre Kassel **Premiere:**
December 1, 2018 (premiere)



dance



Photo: In the constant search for answers at the Staatstheater Kassel: Behind "Anarchy of the Body" lie two thought-provoking choreographies. © N. Klinger

Text: Juliane Sattler-Iffert on December 3, 2018

The stage is a foggy landscape in which figures stand, long since lonely and lost in thought. A stray ray of light falls to the floor to Pink Floyd-like sounds. A sad, gray world. Slowly the characters begin to move forward, each on their own. Dance theater is sometimes like a picture on the wall. You look at it, sink into it, remember, reflect. At the premiere of "Anarchy of the Body" at the Schauspielhaus Kassel, for which dance theater director Johannes Wieland also brought former dancers Annamari Keskinen and Ryan Mason (now as choreographers) to the theater, there are many such moments. Images that stick in your mind, very close to contemporary art.

With "Re-recreator," the recurring act of creating and making, Johannes Wieland drives his nine-person ensemble, five men and four women, into a performance between ecstasy and rapture. These breaks and changes occur again and again on stage, accompanied by Donato Deliano's soundtrack. A whirl of rapid, abstract sequences, falls and rises, poses full of confidence: the body is a creature of consciousness. And then suddenly, as the music also changes to a softer tone, the dancers slow their movements, turn their heads upwards, the flow of their bodies seemingly controlled from outside, the same movement over and over again. Does the body take over? Wieland's dance theater never provides answers; it always asks questions.

Amidst all the movement tableaux, which occasionally incorporate breakdance elements, Luca Ghedini plunges into an endless frenzy of ecstatic movement, while Shafiki Sseggayi spirals forward in a relentless loop of movement. These are strange, magnificent poses. At one point, the dancers, some of whom have removed their dark shirts, lapse into a philosophical discourse on stage. Men and women in search of the formula for the world, of meaning. Each of the nine dancers then represents a stance, a state, as one can read in the program: "Unshakeable truth" and "underestimated hope" debate and contradict each other. This could be exciting, if only one could understand it! When, at the end, the wonderful Cree Barnett Williams, as the "silent victor," says that one just needs to let go, to separate, and then, when the stage curtain comes down and she is separated from the others, this is probably meant to be a humorous twist on life's big questions. Because, as I said, there are no answers.

The opulent dance theater picture book by Annamari Keskinen and Ryan Mason, who present their first joint choreography with "EI," has a strong narrative feel. Although both dancers were members of Wieland's company, they differ greatly from his style. The opening sequences are already astonishing with



their surreal components and unusual visual details: In an interior space, an "inbetween," an old man sits alone in the center. In the sky, a Sputnik (stage design: Matthieu Götz) seems to rotate with its eye, surveillance, observation.

Magnificently dressed men stroll along the side aisles; here another realm, a distant place, awaits. The group of dancers in colorful everyday clothing (costumes: Evelyn Schönwald) crosses the space as if in a race, their movements chopped up in the strobe light: there is no progress, a constant striving forward, but never an arrival. The company's new dramaturge, Lauren Mace, says: "It's a constant beginning and never ending."

In this choreography, set to Ryan Mason's excitingly mixed sound collage, the images also shimmer, a flickering journey through emotional states and surreal landscapes. Swathes of fog waft through the space, in which two dancers, accompanied by vocal baroque music, play a slow-motion tennis match in space, and Morgan Bobrow-Williams dances a dreamlike solo of broken movements. In this world, no one comes close to anyone. Everyone remains alone. At the end, the old man embarks on his final journey. The chair he was sitting on slowly burns away; perhaps the old world is dying. The magnificently dressed people in their costumes made from ethnically diverse pieces gather on the stage. A colorful ending. Could this be an image of hope? There is thunderous applause.



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