

Review on Litsa Kiousi's "Where is the most beautiful funeral? "

Where is the most beautiful funeral? by choreographer Litsa Kiousi, a performance for one dancer, Ms. Kiousi, one actor, Marco Wittorf, and one musician, Sebastian Hilken, took place at 'Panke' in Berlin-Wedding on November 2nd, 2012. Set on a rudimentarily lit stage—a grey concrete floor with white brick walls—the piece begins with the musician onstage alone. Marco Wittorf, wearing dark sun glasses, dark blue pants and an open jacket over a bare upper body, enters the stage through the audience. Standing in an upstage corner, he recites a long list of questions: Do you love yourself? are you addicted to anything? are you afraid? what kept you alive? are you lonely? would you like to change? are you obsessed? what makes beauty? when was the last time you cried?...

Ms. Kiousi walks in via the same path. He continues his questioning. She is wearing green high heels and a see-through mini dress made from clear heavy plastic, her breasts visibly squashed against the material. She remains close to the audience, looking at us intently and intensely, her mouth gradually forming a smile that over a period of a few minutes becomes a silent scream, her body hunched over, culminating in a sudden gasp for air. She grabs a mike and the show begins, again... Part poetry slam, part rock show, the mesh of miked amplified voice, movement, and E-cello vibrations forms a tightly woven net. The dense sound, looped and layered with melodies that resemble a scratchy voice, binds the performers in the space as much as threaten to drown them at times. Ms. Kiousi and Mr. Wittorf keep up a concentrated energy between each other, a strange duo. His hidden eyes give him the appearance of a dark shadow that follows her around, pursues her, crawls next to her, crowds her, speaking with a voice equally matter-of-factly and temptingly sensuous. In front of an ominous brightness covering the back wall, cast by a single fluorescent light, their bodies move through shadowy lights that make it all the more startling whenever their faces are fully illuminated.

The choreography presents large patterns, gradually varying the distance between the performers into new relationships. Far apart for long stretches, they seamlessly shift, at one point ending up downstage, one facing us, the other away. Finally they dissolve the tension into one last song that tells us to "get our ugly faces out of here", an assault that seems more directed towards themselves than us. And one that at that point almost resonates like a term of affection. Their movement is determined by a repertoire of hand gestures, some recognizable, some more abstract: fingers moving in space on an imaginary keyboard, stuffing their fingers and eventually the whole hand into their mouths, grabbing flesh at the waist and seemingly pulling it around to the other side of the body, grabbing the crotch, heads nervously twitching. They are executed at different speeds and dynamics, time-delayed at times as if copying or mocking each other, or in unison, but each performer with a different intensity as if only almost understanding each other. Their stage world as defined and inhabited by them is coherent, equally inviting and rejecting us, exposing details, letting us hold on to things briefly before carrying on.

A David Lynch-like maze of arising beginnings, endings, sensations and various proceedings, always ending up at what seems to be the underlying, if mysterious, sensation at hand. Ms. Kiousi's performance brings to mind the way Patti Smith delivers her poetry: part sensitive whisper, part angry bark, genuinely delivered and in the passionate spirit of caring about mankind. She switches from being the lead singer of the band to being the lonely and tireless solo dancer immersed in the abyss of the self, pushing us to think harder to answer the questions, pulling us into the muddy pond with her.

(1.11.2012, Elke Rindfleisch - choreographer)