As if the dancers’ bodies are being retuned after a long period of standstill

Bergens Tidende, page 24 - 7 June

(Caption): The Carte Blanche production ‘But Then, We’ll Disappear (I’d Prefer Not To)’ captured the BT reviewer’s imagination

As if the dancers’ bodies are being retuned after a long period of standstill

Carte Blanche’s new dance production is well-composed, inviting and exquisite.

REVIEWS: DANCE

But then, we’ll disappear (I’d prefer not to)

First performance Carte Blanche, Studio Bergen

Choreography and lighting design: Frédérick Gravel

Music: Philippe Brault

Costume design: Indrani Balgobin

Choreography design: Jamie Wright

Dancers: Ole Martin Meland, Mathias Stoltenberg, Caroline Eckly, Adrian Bartczak, Dawid Lorenc, Max Makowski, Aslak Aune Nygård, Noam Eidelman Shatil, Nadege Kubwayo, Timothy Bartlett, Anne Lise Rønne, Vilja Kwasny, Mai Lisa Guinoo

Original songs by: Frédérick Gravel

A co-production with Bergen International Festival 2021

The dance production ‘But then, we’ll disappear (I’d prefer not to)’, was long in the thinking stage, but has actually been put together very quickly. The result is inviting and exquisite.

The opening scene is reminiscent of the beginning of a party where people have not seen each other for a long time. We all know what that kind of party can be like. They can be really fun, but also awkward and embarrassing.

Boundaries may have moved over time and people may have changed since the last time you saw them. The room fills with fluid, quite dark encompassing synth music while the audience find their seats. A couple of dancers have already taken the floor. The expression is exploratory.

An arm and a shoulder are pulled so far back that they appear to be on the verge of dislocation. They turn their feet a little too far, and hands are bent backwards in searching movements. It is as if the dancers’ bodies are being retuned after a long period of standstill.

Some chairs and a couple of simple light-grey two-seater sofas are set out along the walls. Other dancers sit apart from one another, gazing at it all, expectantly. They are dressed in soft summer colours, pastels or beige, while some items of clothing are in neon colours.

This is the first performance of the production by Canadian choreographer Frédérick Gravel. As well as being the choreographer, he is also a musician, lighting designer, and dancer.

He is known for including elements of rock, the singer-songwriter tradition and cabaret. He also moves the art of dance towards art performance. This has led to him becoming one of the most important voices in dance.

The scenography also includes an old brown piano that is open at the front. Some simple lights and a couple of microphones are placed beside it. So we assume there will be singing and playing. And talking.

The build-up is slow.

The sound effects gradually, almost imperceptibly, change. It looks like a real party is developing. It is interesting to follow each dancer with your gaze. But then something happens that often happens at parties. The partygoers start reorganising the furniture.

Chairs and sofas are pulled towards the centre of the room, and someone gets a square mat that is rolled out. Others act as if they are rock stars trying the microphones to test the sound.

Suddenly the intense music is replaced by the sound of a cello playing Bach, the dancers sit down quietly on the sofas and chairs, a couple take place in front of the microphones, to say something.

Several dancers introduce themselves, and tell us a little about why they are there. There are lots of reasons, and there is humour. This is reminiscent of the build-up to a political speech, but also good-natured stand-up.

One of the dancers then starts playing the piano. Playing simple chords, he starts singing. It’s good, but bordering on embarrassing. Especially when he starts singing another song after the first song. Because now there is a sense that he will keep going until someone tells him to stop.

The production’s last sequence is introduced via the microphone like a musician talking between songs.

It concludes with an intense dance sequence where the company works on synchronism and rhythm, all the bodies pulsating in the same rhythm and becoming a vigorous unit.

GRETHE MELBY

Theatre critic, BT