Celebration of life and intoxication



‘Soufflette’ is a physical celebration of desire, nature and diversity.

REVIEW DANCE ‘Soufflette’

Bergen International Festival Carte Blanche production.

Studio Bergen

The young, French choreographer François Chaignaud is behind this year’s Bergen International Festival production by Carte Blanche. The title, ‘Soufflette’, is also French, and is a ‘French slang word meaning to blow smoke into the mouth of another person. It is an intimate act in which the breath brings life and intoxication.’

**It is precisely this,** life and intoxication, that are key elements of the production, which comes across as a secret party, a celebration or awakening in a lush forest or garden. The dancers initially crawl out of cupboards and chests of drawers. The stage is decorated with floral creations. The dancers wear enormous, crocheted garments, and both the costumes and the props are beautiful.

The dancers sing and hum, and seem more like creatures or supernatural beings than people. They make rhythms using their feet, and they dance around in clusters, almost as in a ritual. The light is still dim, and an interesting interplay arises between light and dark and the bodies in their large costumes.

The dance company again impresses us with their bel canto skills, and provide the soundtrack to the production themselves with psalm-like versions of e.g. ‘Killing Me Softly’ and ‘Is this love’ (the result is much nicer than it sounds).

An accordion-like instrument is also a feature of the dance and helps to reinforce the sense of mystery. They alternate between focusing on themselves, each other and also approach us directly. Making the dance fit in with the songs and the bodily percussion is impressive and the tension and nerve in the production develop nicely.

The production starts with the dancers fully clothed, before they eventually become naked and almost at one with nature by putting on enormous flower arrangements. This produces some fantastically beautiful scenic images towards the end, and plays with typical expectations of what is masculine and feminine.

The dance alternates between the hard and the softest and most sensual, but it always seems like a celebration and a party where pleasure is all.

It is also an obvious strength of Carte Blanche that it is a diverse company, with many different types of dancers with different backgrounds. The way people look and how they express themselves also varies a lot.

There is always great anticipation linked to the magazines that accompany Carte Blanche’s productions, which aim to lift the production and the dialogue away from the stage. The writers selected often add an extra dimension to what the company and the director seek to communicate in a production.

The guest editor is Gisle A Gjevestad Agledahl, who presented the series ‘Jævla homo’, and he has chosen very interesting contributors, including Ulrikke Falch, Nils Bech and Sumaya Jirde Ali. They all write about limits, shame, norms, expectations, and the magazine also has a clear queer theme.

The production's shamelessness and degree of excess become even more striking when these texts are brought into the mix.

CHARLOTTE MYRBRÅTEN

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