



## A declaration of love without any risk

On the fourth Rencontres chorégraphiques  
internationaux de Bagnolet.

My personal artistic reflections on this Rencontres lead me to the conclusion that, in all the works that I've seen in the last few days, I've missed an element of subversion, of anarchy and of passion. If dance is a declaration of love (according to the motto of the Rencontres) and if love is not bound by rules and laws, then I want to be able to feel this coming from the stage.»

In something like these terms Jan Fabre, president of the jury at the fourth Rencontres chorégraphiques internationales de Bagnolet Seine-St. Denis (that didn't take place in Bagnolet but in the neighbouring town of Bobigny near Paris) formulated his concluding remarks and so hit the mark when describing the vapid feeling that the works presented there left behind in many of the spectators.

Hard words to round off an event that has grown to represent a similar rigour and value for contemporary dance to that

which Cannes holds for the film world.

Nineteen works from twelve countries were presented in the Maison de la Culture in Bobigny, selected at 28 preliminary forums worldwide. Few of them stood out. At a gathering of artists from all over the world one would expect diversity; so much the greater was the disappointment then, when so many were similar in their means of expression, dynamics and sometimes even in their movement vocabulary, and when hardly anything was there that really gripped one, opened the eyes, contained aspects of art and life or provoked one to further thought.

Overall, however, the artistic standard and above all the dancerly quality of the work was higher compared to the last Rencontres in 1992. The shifts in representation of countries is interesting; the former boom countries of Belgium, Great Britain and also France itself have fallen by

the wayside; no group from Belgium or Britain made it and even the French were represented by only two groups (In 1992 there were five). On the upswing were Asia with two groups each from Japan and South Korea, Scandinavia with two Swedish and one Norwegian group, and the Netherlands, who sent three productions (one of them not competing). Canada, as well, was represented by two groups.

A 22-strong prestigious international jury under Fabre's chairmanship awarded, in all, four main prizes and eight further commendations in the three categories, «National Section», «Professional Choreography» and «Young Authors». The two grand prix for the national section, each with a value of 200,000 francs, went to Jens Östberg (Sweden) and to Maria Voortman and Roberto de Jonge from Holland. Amanda Miller (Germany) and William Douglas (Canada) shared the equally-valued grand prix for

professional choreography. The Frankfurt-based Italians Laura Simi and Damiano Foa took the prize for young authors (with a value of 100,000 francs). The jury gave a «special mention» to the Croat Boru Separovic for his work, «Everybody goes to disco from Moscow to San Francisco».

The Croatian piece leaves the spectator with a feeling of shock, amusement or confusion and helplessness depending on one's personal temperament. It begins with a coquettish and original pas de deux, but playful lust and lightness are soon discarded; Separovic's staged disco experiences appear more dangerous than pleasurable. The place of the action, according to the stage setting, is a men's toilet; the dance is performed by two women who work in aggressive little dresses that conceal little (they take off their pants right at the beginning of the piece) and three men in black everyday clothes, all of whom blow up and burst a lot of condoms in the course of the piece and threaten and shoot at each other. There's a lot of naked flesh on view but the effect is neither erotic nor aesthetic but rather exposed and defenceless. The sexual exchanges are sometimes shocking and violent, sometimes awkward and tender, but in every case risky. Heady stuff for the audience, and the music, occasionally close to the pain threshold in volume and frequency, had the effect of making the consumption of this piece physically demanding. Not a finely-honed piece, nor highly competent, with its dramaturgic weaknesses, but a sharp, courageous and impressive piece of work, convincing in its strong-willed physical expressiveness. Bagnolet will be co-producers of Separovic's next piece.

Amanda Miller's «Night, by Itself» was captivating in its wonderfully poetical use of space, an evocatively supportive sleepwalking atmosphere and, above all, the impressive virtuosity of the dancers.

William Douglas' strangely cold and angry trio, «We Were Warned» was performed by three powerful dancers, two men and a woman, who exchanged movement and direction impulses in partly tender, partly hard contacts. The space is spotted and defined by various mirror balls.