



SOUL(O) STORY

EN "I think that the best plan is that I grow to be my own size and then, that I find my way," says Charlotte Vanden Eynde, quoting from *Alice in Wonderland*. Fragmented fairytales, two dresses, a pair of shoes, and her own body help this atypical artist draw a moving portrait of a woman perched at a pivotal point in her existence.

I'm Sorry It's (Not) a Story — Charlotte Vanden Eynde DANS / DANSE / DANCE

23 & 24.4.2010 20.30 — €10/12,50

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"The impetus for *I'm Sorry It's (Not) a Story*, was personal, the departure point was an attempt at self-analysis," explains Vanden Eynde. "I felt it was time to really come face to face with myself." Vanden Eynde has never been shy of delving deep into issues that concern her. Her performances seem to excavate layer upon layer of meaning and sensation until clear-cut images, loaded with poignancy, are revealed. Her work is a distinctive mix of concept and emotion, of movement and stillness, of visual richness and stark aesthetics. Vanden Eynde has chiselled out a unique place for herself in the international landscape of dance and performance art.

Born in 1975, she began dancing at the age of 9, taking ballet classes after school. She went on to study at the Higher Institute for Dance in Lier and later at P.A.R.T.S. in Brussels. Whilst still at school she started making pieces that stood out as highly individual and received much critical acclaim. "In *Benenbreken*, *Zij ogen*, and *Vrouwenvouwen*, the young choreographer has made three remarkable pieces," said the press back in 2000. Since then, her body of work has continued to grow and she has extended her artistic remit to include video, film, the visual arts and acting. "Nevertheless, I think dance and live performance are still the forms through which I express myself

the most directly," she says. "For *I'm Sorry It's (Not) a Story*, I really set out alone in an empty space, with nothing but a blank page and the hope that something would emerge. I also wanted to push myself to really dance, to use less of the still images that have previously featured in my work and discover a way of moving that I hadn't explored before."

The March Hare's ears

Vanden Eynde is a compelling performer. Her translucent looks mean her face can switch from angelic to world-weary in an instant. Some of her movements appear at once abstract and highly symbolic: a hand drawn down her exposed neck, cheeks or buttock slapped continually, fingers scrunching her stomach or face. The gestures feel all the more chillingly significant because they are executed with dispassion.

"I wanted to use text too," she continues, "I've always been scared of using words but in this piece it became necessary. I'm interested in how an audience invests meaning in the movements they see and how hearing texts before or afterwards modifies their perception of those movements." Indeed a pair of hands, fingers upturned placed on her head, becomes the March Hare's ears or the Sleeping Beauty's crown depending on what we've heard murmured before.

"I'm also interested in how small adjustments change how I move and who an audience sees me to be. I begin wearing a very plain, unsexy dress and, at a certain point, I peel it off to reveal a more feminine, red one underneath. The red dress makes me feel different so, automatically, the way I move alters. I like the transformation because in fact, I metamorphose into someone who was already there."

"The aim is to tell a personal story," she concludes, "but, at the same time, I hope the spectators find some resonance for themselves in what they see."

Indeed Vanden Eynde's persona conjures up images of the archetypal fairytale heroine, but her angst is too recognisable, and too contemporary, to only belong in the safe realms of fiction or fantasy.

NL Met *I'm sorry it's (not) a story* keert Charlotte Vanden Eynde terug naar de essentie van beweging en zichzelf. Resultaat is een sprookjesachtig verhaal dat tegelijk zo herkenbaar is dat het zich aan de fictie ontrukkt.

FR La performeuse Charlotte Vanden Eynde s'est construit un univers créatif personnel entre danse, film, comédie et art. Elle présente le portrait d'une femme à un moment crucial de sa vie dans une ambiance de conte de fées atypique.