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DANCE REVIEW | 'MAP ME'

Using Stillness to Stretch Choreography's Meaning



Andrea Mohin/The New York Times

Kurt Vandendriessche, left, and Charlotte Vanden Eynde, joined by tape, in "Map Me" at Dance Theater Workshop.

By ROSLYN SULCAS
Published: September 15, 2007

"What is dance today, and how does it fit into the larger cultural picture?" Carla Peterson, the artistic director of [Dance Theater Workshop](#), asked on Thursday night during a post-performance discussion of Charlotte Vanden Eynde and Kurt Vandendriessche's "Map Me."

No one answered that query — nor did "Map Me," an enigmatic duo performed with chilly, surgical precision by its Belgian creators. But it certainly raised the question, even before Ms. Peterson gave it voice.

In "Map Me," the compactly built Mr. Vandendriessche and Ms. Vanden Eynde, an angelic-faced, slim-bodied blonde, lie on their sides on top of each other so that their joined naked backs form a blank screen for a series of video projections. Striations, bruises, burns and nasty-looking rashes bloom and disappear.

Later the dancers stand, their bodies passive vessels for other images. Ms. Vanden Eynde's body appears to be carved up into drawers that are opened and closed; Mr. Vandendriessche's body is "built" by light that illuminates, segment by segment, his torso and limbs.

Up to this point, "Map Me" — performed entirely nude (almost obligatory these days), in utter silence and with a notable economy of gesture — feels theoretical, like someone's dissertation project or a museum installation.

But in a subsequent section called "join me," in which the pair create headpieces of brown tape that bind their heads together as if they were conjoined twins, the work

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As an urgent and loud Italian song shockingly breaks the silence, Ms. Vanden Eynde and Mr. Vandendriessche move slowly and sculpturally, a two-bodied, one-headed, faceless beast with bodies lighted to look like marble.

It is not the only moment when "Map Me," created in 2003, evokes sculpture and painting; Canova, Magritte, Cranach and Roy Lichtenstein (in a section in which the pair draw stick figures on each other's bodies) all come to mind at various points. But it is the moment when the work achieves a succinct, poetic resonance that illuminates all the questions about gender, relationships, symbiosis and separateness that it had raised.

Is it dance? Does it matter? Although the body is the primary medium, and the work is scrupulously choreographed to the last, puzzling moments, it could almost certainly be performed by nondancers. Perhaps the short answer might be that it is dance because it is presented at Dance Theater Workshop. And, as the postmodernists suggested almost 50 years ago, if music can embrace silence, why shouldn't dance occasionally stand still?

"Map Me" will be performed tonight at Dance Theater Workshop, 219 West 19th Street, Chelsea; (212) 691-6500 or dtw.org

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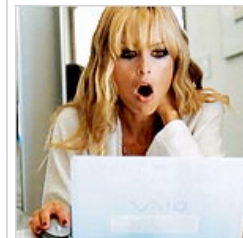
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