

De Morgen, 05/05/2003

'Sonic Boom' by Ultima Vez and Toneelgroep Amsterdam

Vandekeybus finds new breath

He has announced it several times in the past already, but with his performance *Sonic Boom* Wim Vandekeybus really seems to have found a new breath. It gives him a billing on the Dutch-Flemish Theatre Festival for the first time in his career.

Point of departure of *Sonic Boom* was the invitation by Ivo Van Hove, director of Toneelgroep Amsterdam (TA), to make a guest direction. Vandekeybus attended some rehearsals of the company and finally selected born actors Joop Admiraal, Kitty Courbois and Titus Muizelaar. The serenity and presence of those TA veterans makes a sharp contrast with the impatient bodies of eight young Ultima Vez dancers surrounding them in *Sonic Boom*. In this confrontation lies the key for the balance between language and corporality that Vandekeybus has been searching for since a couple of years.

After *Scratching the Inner Fields* and *Blush*, a text by Peter Verhelst is once again the thread in *Sonic Boom*, in which this time the remembrance to a brief encounter between a man and a woman on a sultry night comes back in different variations. Have they really met? Has she really left? Did he rape her? Verhelst does not give straight answers, but creates a sensual atmosphere of yearning, loss and death, which is expressed with restrained emotions by Admiraal, Courbois, Muizelaar and Ina Geerts. That love is pain, finds its physical equivalent in a powerful scene during which dancers and actors ceaselessly fall at great pace. From a table, from a chair or from the railing suggesting a front with view on the horizon.

Vandekeybus meanders continuously between word and movement. The American deejay of night radio Sonic Boom, announcing music by among others David Eugene Edwards of 16 Horsepower in a way that reminds ofn the soundtrack of Tarantino's *Reservoir Dogs*, pushes the dancers cold and well-calculated to self-mutilation and brutality. The subdued violence of Verhelst's poetry suddenly becomes very explicit. His varnished, longing bodies find a response in aggressive dance phases. The tragic of love finds an answer in death. In Ina Geerts jumping of the railing, in covering the frail body of Joop Admiraal with ashes. With caution Vandekeybus searched for images from his own repertoire, intensifying the spirit of Verhelst's text. He cites, but doses too, and that is a real relief after the nerve-racking *Blush*.

Sally De Kunst.