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Carmen del Val

A brilliant hurricane of dance

Hair-raising, brilliant, vicious and wild is the dance in *nieuwZwart*, the agonizing performance that Wim Vandekeybus has created for his company Ultima Vez and that premièred last Saturday at Mercat de les Flors. This choreography was created in Belgium, the company's home base, but finalized after a week's residency in Mercat, one of the co-producers of the performance. The piece will also be performed from May 14th till 17th.

Vandekeybus is a master in putting on stage the fear that gnaws man and in *nieuwZwart* the viewer feels an asphyxiating lump in the throat right from beginning of the piece, while in his mind his miseries crop out and he perceives the fragility that makes him a victim of himself and the others. With his magic stick, the magician in Vandekeybus conjures the viewer into the dark craters on the stage, these obscure and cruel holes that haunt him. He does this on the rhythm of rock. An aggressive rock, sometimes transformed into a natural storm that is performed live on stage by the composer of the music Mauro Pawlowski, together with Elko Blijweert and Jeroen Stevens. They play on a platform that hangs from the ceiling.

Overwhelming

In this choreography by the Belgian creator the alegory of Plato's cave is hidden; the soul and the mind face each other as two violent enemies that transform the performers into wild animals that climb mountains, cross rivers or try to flee from the passions that make them prisoners. The overwhelming and avant-garde vocabulary of Vandekeybus knocks out the audience from the start of the performance by its swirling dance in which the seven surprisingly young performers (three women and four men, who co-created the performance), profile themselves as experienced acrobats and superb dancers. Their bodies sculpted by their aggressive movements, turn and twist or desperately launch themselves against a wall that they can not overthrow. Their movement vocabulary is rich and versatile. The only objection is that maintaining the dance during 75 minutes with such an aggressive tone makes that by the end of the performance the audience loses its attention and starts to get bored.

One of the main assets of *nieuwZwart* is Gavin Webber, a magnificent and good-looking actor who recites the texts by Peter Verhelst and has an active part in the performance.

Also the set, created by Wim Vandekeybus, deserves special mentioning: an immense golden cover that changes into a wood, the consciousness and the sea of the tormented inhabitants. The fragment, in which the guardians lift this big golden wave, making the bodies of the naked performers visible, is hypnotising. Fear becomes master of the stage.