

## 'Blush' Reinvents Love

- A new space, new dancers, new music, Vandekeybus wins his bet
- 'Blush', a magnificent performance about love, explodes with energy

The bet was daring: on Tuesday, choreographer Wim Vandekeybus began a new phase with 'Blush': a new space (a small stage at the Bottelarij in Molenbeek), a very different music (the marvelous David Eugene Edwards of 16 Horsepower, very convincing) and a new group of dancers. The result is remarkable.

One knows straightaway that one is in a 'Vandekeybus', with the violence and the poetry, the drive and the tenderness, delivered in a visual and bodily shock. The stage is dark, a man snores, asleep, and a woman makes love to him. Another screams, taping a brick against her head. An actress approaches the audience and crushes a glass, the pieces scattering on the floor.

The language of Vandekeybus is that of German expressionists, of early Pina Bausch. The entire performance speaks of the different states of love: what is it to love? Is it marvelous or only chemical? Is it hell or paradise? The dancers literally explode from love, jumping then collapsing on the floor. The women transform into raging animals, like the Bacchantes of Euripides. And then comes the time for gentleness. Vandekeybus uses the cinema as an integral part of the performance and in a marvelous way. A large screen projects strong images of swimmers, cane fields, moving bodies, dolphins, pigs, frogs. The dancers throw themselves into the screen, going through it to return as uterine images of themselves, swimming in moiré waters. Rarely has the symbiosis between images and dance been so strong, so necessary. A frog plays the link, passing from the hand of a dancer to the mouth of another before invading the screen.

### Larva

Love is lived with sorrow. The men leave hell followed by their Eurydice's and try not to turn back. Others dress, with at their feet live shadows – couples joined impossibly between vertical and it's projection. A large wall of cushions (*bags, note from the translator*) covers the screen. They collapse, symbol of September 11<sup>th</sup>, rolling to a devilish childbirth scene. One dancer submits to a prenatal examination and others wait coiled in bags like larva to become, not butterflies, but frogs.

The performance swarms with invention, alternating the gentleness of love and the sorrow of impossible lovers, in couples, head against head, in love-fights. The impressive music of Edwards frames this heaven-hell duality. All but three of the dancers are new, coming from the four corners of the planet. On stage one speaks English, French, Dutch, Spanish. They have a confounding generosity in their physical efforts. Wim Vandekeybus, on stage himself, dances and directs the Dionysian ceremony. In superb resonance with the skidding of our hearts.