

NEXT WAVE FESTIVAL REVIEW; Dashing Through a Storm of Color, With a Preference for Pink

By JACK ANDERSON

"Rain" is refreshing.

That's not a comment on the weather. It's an assessment of the lovely work choreographed by Anne Teresa De Keersmaecker that Rosas, her Brussels-based company, presented on Wednesday night at a gala performance at the Brooklyn Academy of Music.

This "Rain" was often pink. It lasted 70 minutes and was an attraction of the Next Wave Festival.

The dance for a cast of 10 is set to Steve Reich's "Music for 18 Musicians," a piece for instrumentalists and singers that was performed on stage by Ictus and Synergy Vocals, also of Brussels. The score weaves together many chiming and pulsing sounds, all pleasing to the ear.

Both Ms. De Keersmaecker and Mr. Reich have long been fond of intricately patterned movements and music. Sometimes in the past, Ms. De Keersmaecker's patterns have evoked turbulent emotions.

She has said that one of her inspirations for "Rain" was a novel of the same name by Kirsty Gunn, a New Zealand writer. Its story concerns a drowning. Yet although the dancers sometimes plunge to the floor, no one stays down and out for long. However the novel may have influenced the choreography, the dance is exhilarating.

The stage does turn pink during "Rain." Before that happens, it glows with other colors, thanks to the scenery and lighting by Jan Versweyveld. The set is a semicircular curtain of dangling ropes ringing the back and sides of the space. It resembles a wall. Yet it's a wall that can easily be broken apart by dancers running in and out between the ropes. Nor is this wall opaque, for the musicians remain visible behind it.

Before "Rain" starts, the stage is bathed in golden sunshine. The dancers enter costumed by Dries Van Noten in simple shirts, trousers and skirts of neutral hues.

They run in circles, again and again. Choreographic currents make groups form and dissolve. Individuals detach themselves from groups and rush off on their own, as if swept away by tides. People race across the stage on diagonals and sweep and swoop around it.

As they move, they occasionally make soft sighing and puffing noises. Mr. Reich's score is based in part on breath rhythms, and the dancers' noises may be Ms. De Keersmaecker's way of acknowledging the importance of breath in dancing.

Women gallop with an exultation that recalls some of the early 20th-century modern-dance works of Isadora Duncan. Three men bounce about and tumble like gymnasts. Dancers occasionally touch, lift and carry one another, and the number of lifts increases as the dance proceeds.

While all this happens, the lighting changes colors, eventually turning pink. Parts of the costumes also become pink, for when dancers re-enter after leaving the stage, they wear bits and pieces of pink, and sometimes purple, material.

At one point everyone vanishes behind the rope curtain, only to rush back through it in a torrent of steps that sets all the ropes rippling. There are moments when the pace grows more intense and the choreography makes people bump and push one another.

But wildness never leads to outright violence. The storms in "Rain" are not catastrophic. And the repetition of circular patterns throughout the production gives the choreography a sense of overall unity and flow.

Gradually, pink hues vanish from the lighting. Pink also disappears from the costumes, for when dancers re-enter after brief absences their attire is as plain as it was at the beginning.

The music gradually fades. The dancers continue running for a moment in silence, pause in suspended animation, then exit. This soothing "Rain" has ended.

Photo: The Brussels-based company Rosas in "Rain," choreographed by Anne Teresa De Keersmaecker, at the Brooklyn Academy of Music. (Photo by Stephanie Berger for The New York Times)