

Oysters or Kombucha?

Anne Teresa De Keersmaecker brings 'Rain' to Brussels

A great, self-ironical celebration of eclecticism: that was 'In Real Time,' Anne Teresa De Keersmaecker's last piece. It blended *Rosas* dancers with her sister's theatre ensemble, *ig, Stan*, and with the jazz musicians of Aka Moon. 'In Real Time' meant watching 23 dancers, actors, and musicians speak in foreign tongues. Dance, music, and text were to be used in such a manner that the loss of native language meant a gain in other resources. The concept depended on the comprehensibility of these idioms. Which proved to be the inherent structural error of the whole piece.

'In Real Time' was like a wedding party that had been prepared for many months; a ritual, within whose precise sequence of events, happiness could spontaneously discharge its spark. 'Rain' presents a ritual of the still hush on the day after: the hangover breakfast. Steve Reich's 'Music For 18 Musicians' is served up to reinvigorate the remaining guests: ten dancers. In 'Rain,' the movement phases correspond as precisely to the various musical rhythms as in the last Reich rendering, 'Drumming.'

'Music For 18 Musicians' places the rhythm of human breathing, represented by voices and wind instruments, over the driving, rhythmic pulse of piano and percussion. One perceives rising and falling formations of sound overlaying the bustling uniformity of the basic tempo. 'Music For 18 Musicians' is influenced by the drumbeat of Africa and the gamelan music of Java, and it strives for nothing less than the reconciliation of nature and art beyond all things religious. The music possesses a sameness that is only seemingly so. The choreographic answers to the minimal



changes of the music are as simple as they are clever, as flowing as they are constructed. The dancers react to the basic rhythm with runs and walks, *passé* leaps, *grand jetés*, and *battements*.

A second level visualises each movement being created from the breath. Just as Reich has the women's voices fade out 'naturally,' in exhalation, the dancers let themselves be led by slow movements until they reach their natural physical limits. Which provides for individualisation of the material even in the synchronised passages.

But the dancers' appearance behind a convex curtain made of cords with heavy tassels signals the preparation for an agon, a contest: People gather, hands on their hips. The lighting dips everything in gold. The dancers in their skin-coloured and white costumes

seem as if captured in a precious *daguerreotype*. Dries van Noten's delicate and elegantly simple clothing, the flouncing skirts with their wide ruffles and slits, and the simple, but in no way banal, shirts and trousers of the three men correspond visually exactly to the air of a dance whose every movement is both guided and controlled, yet seems relaxed.

Strong hues of rose and pink rise very gradually among the other colours; and, at the end, return to monochrome. 'Rain' is a continual rising and ebbing of sensual impressions. Lighting, colour, sound, and kinaesthetic events are staged like fluctuations between overwhelming natural phenomena and a tranquility arising from aesthetic sensibility. On the day after the great celebration in 'Rain,' dance and music serve up Bel-

gian chocolate and Kombucha, the old secret esoteric recipe, as a remedy for hangover. Champagne and oysters are not of De Keersmaecker's sustenance.

Wiebke Hüster

On tour:

**7 to 10 Mar, DeSingel, Antwerpen (B);
20 Mar, Le Carreau-Scène Nationale,
Forbach; 23 and 24 Mar, Théâtre des
Arts, Rouen; 27 to 31 Mar, Théâtre
de la Ville, Paris (all F);
3 Apr, Cultureel Centrum Hasselt (B);
18 Apr, Culturporto, Porto (P)**