

Breaking the Next Wave

By Deborah
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At least twice before, Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker has followed a dramatic piece with a "pure" one distilled from it. The feelings the 2001 *Rain* stir up may be a residue of the brilliantly thoughtful Belgian choreographer's *In Real Time* (not seen in New York).

Rain is her sixth work grounded in (or involving) music by Steve Reich, to which she shows an uncanny sensitivity. In Reich's thrilling *Music for 18 Musicians*, sustained melodic phrases (clarinets, violin, voices) are layered over primarily rhythmic ones (marimbas, xylophones, pianos, maracas, etc.). Rhythmic alterations in the constant pulse, applied to a repeating melodic phrase, subtly transform it. Like the music, the dancing never stops, although the seven women and three men in De Keersmaeker's company, Rosas, occasionally do, and running is a frequent motif. The same phrases keep cropping up, varied in terms of sequence, rhythm, dynamics, and personnel.

The stage picture designed by Jan Versweyveld is stunning, with the musicians dimly visible behind a semicircular curtain of ropes suspended from a huge hoop overhead. Brushed by the dancers, the ropes act like wind-lashed rain. The lights flash subtly, burn coolly, and suddenly flood the stage with pink. Bit by bit, selected items of Dries Van Noten's soft beige costumes are exchanged for others in pink, then fuchsia; a few return beyond beige to sparkling white at the end.

Rain intertwines two ideas. One is that of water: dancing that swells, eddies, forms pools and whirlpools, foams up against obstacles, breaks free, rushes along. Dancers sometimes cross the stage in a tidal line that drops people in its wake or passes over and around them. They tilt to the side as if testing a current before plunging into it. One performer lifted by a group seems to bubble up from a confluence of forces. And many of these images appear simultaneously in different places onstage. There are no severe storms, only bursts of energy.

The other dominant image is playful, almost childlike—the movement springy, natural-looking, with free-swinging arms and loosely pointed feet. Running side by side or veering, brought together by their phrases, dancers may exchange smiles or friendly touches. Often those walking or running around the perimeter watch soloists as if the activity were a game they were waiting to enter.

For all its delicacy, however, De Keersmaeker's choreography, like Reich's music, breathes as deeply as the ocean.