

review

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By Stefan Dzeparoski, DCPA Beograd

DANCE THEATER

LUMINOUS, KARAS

Saburo Teshigawara Choreography, Set, & Lighting Design
Saburo Teshigawara / Kei Miyata Musical Comp. & Costumes

Dancers: Saburo Teshigawara, Kei Miyata, Rihoko Sato, Mie Kawamura, Azusa Yoshida, Chisato Mizukami, Yukiko Doi, Stuart Jackson, Evroy Deer.

LUMINOUS is dance of light and movement. Pure light and pure movement. Poetic world of light, shade, shadows and reflections is unfolding in front of us. Music is the silence. Phosphorescent world is created by light bouncing from the walls and the bodies of the dancers.

The production was the opening show of this year's International Festival dance program. The story of LUMINOUS is a narrative made out of changing lights, shadows, and reflections. The movement of bodies is based on breathing. Dancers are moving in and out of the darkness. LUMINOUS matches choreography with technological trickery: multiple reflections scatter around the stage, music and the shadows thrown on the wall.

Teshigawara says that his choreography is based on trust, which becomes most obvious in Part Two of the performance. The dancers have no physical contact, and attention is focused on Stuart Jackson who has been blind since birth. The trust among the dancers is what Teshigawara calls "shared air." Stuart himself is questioning the darkness, because he carries his own field of darkness.

With LUMINOUS, Teshigawara is looking for new artistic challenges. In creating his work, his research brought him to the world of film, visual art, and non-fiction. LUMINOUS is questioning the line between light and air, "invisible" forces that support and condition our very existence. For Teshigawara's performance, one has to know how to read space, not time. The use of light seems to make time unimportant. And regardless of the high-tech elements of the performance, it is the human body that is central and provides the enlightening dance in LUMINOUS.

With this performance, Teshigawara seems to suggest that there is no darkness, just a temporary absence of light. Time, space, and gravity become almost tangible through the interplay between movement and light. For Teshigawara, darkness is a partner in dance - a dance that is almost like traveling without movement.

THE GIRL ON THE SOFA

By Jon Fosse
English version by David Harrower
Thomas Ostermeier Director
Rufus Didwidszus Designer

A girl on the verge of adulthood is sitting on a sofa, unhappy: she resents her mother and older sister and longs for her absent father, a sailor. What is she going to do with her life? She considers becoming a painter... but she cannot paint. Something is wrong, and it may be her past: father is not coming back; mother has a new man - in front of the Girl, she is calling him an "uncle;" older sister is sexually frustrated and about to become a prostitute, but later on will choose to be a gynecologist.

A woman approaching middle age is painting a self-portrait, watching her younger self: the girl on the sofa. People from the past are present, watching her, judging her, without words. There is distant music, like parts of forgotten melody. The woman's present problems are linked to those of the past: she is still at odds with her sister and mother and haunted by her father. She begins to doubt her artistic ability... doubt in herself as an artist and a woman. She feels that she can never be a good woman and thinks that she cannot exist without the past. Girl On the Sofa explores the complex interweaving of the past with the present by abandoning chronological time. Life is happening in the past and present, and so forces us to look at our melancholy existence anew. The ending is only ours.

The play starts with photos from the Girl's past on a large screen. Behind it is her room, surrounded by big gray walls. Between is her room without any walls but with a construction resembling a cage or prison instead. People from the past are coming in and out through that cage. They are silent in the present, yet they are watching, judging. Light is an element of hidden memories from the Girl's mind, sometimes bright, but often full of smoke whose origin remains uncertain.

A perfect ensemble cast, excellent actors, rich in expression with a minimum of gestures. There is no star in this production, and the eight actors are playing like one. It is always hard to try playing something new, completely different, and being truthful in that. Thomas is a clever director, with great precision in every choice made.

Girl on the Sofa is simple yet deep, a play that makes one feel involved. Cultural specifics seem to be unimportant because this is a story about humanity - about feelings, lost memories and a frozen, frightening present. For two hours we are watching characters that could be us, yet the experience is that of a new kind of theater, for a new time... for new people.