

Marcin Miętus | dancePOLSKA.pl | 2019

"D3US / X \ M4CHIN4" at BalletOFFFestival 2018

Relations

February 8, 2019

About the future, in a completely different, trance and spectacular edition, that's the story Fernando Belfiore tries to tell. A choreographer and performer, born in Brazil, associated with the contemporary dance scene in the Netherlands, places the human and the machine at the center of the performance. The technology in D3US / X \ M4CHIN4 almost floods the stage, working equally with performers, on the principle of coexistence. It has mainly a usable function and accompanies choreography of performers, but it is also autonomous. The subjectivity of props is revealed in their indissoluble correlation with the world presented - some objects operate independently of performers (for example, an ultra-modern cradle for a child or a self-cleaning vacuum cleaner). At first glance, typical, but used in a way that differs from the traditional (eg a vacuum cleaner pipe as a microphone stand), the devices are a kaleidoscope of future gadgets. They function as an inseparable, almost organic element of this cybernetic universe, probably anchored somewhere in the future. The iconosphere of the show draws inspiration from the virtual world and science-fiction movies; geometrical forms dominate, props are chromed, and lighting is intense - fluorescent lights are on the stage, fluorescent light is also used, and at some moments a stroboscope is used. Sterility and scenographic minimalism (the playing field at the very beginning is completely empty) gives way to filling the space with modern equipment, reminiscent of exhibitions or installations of contemporary art inspired by modern objects.

The transliterated title of the play refers directly to the Greek tragedy and the concept introduced by Euripides, meaning the intervention of a force majeure in order to solve the situation without a way out. Although in D3US / X \ M4CHIN4 there is no hero who would be burdened with fate (we are dealing with a collective hero), the role of the gods and their unexpected intervention, affecting the development of the show, is attributed to technology. In the world presented on the stage, a man, entangled in a network of various connections, is a relational being, defined by objects (here: machines) and closely related to them.

On the wide stage, separated by a white ballet floor and a row of fluorescent lights, the performer appears dressed in sneakers, a silver blouse and short shorts. Her slow and hard footsteps are accompanied by a sound that fills the entire room; bass, deep noises cause vibrations of the audience. After a while, two more, similarly dressed women come to the empty stage, stopping and closing their eyes - the lights in the audience go out. For a long time, the characters move without opening their eyes. Loud house music will awaken them from this lethargy, to which they will begin to dance intensely. The movement, which is associated with colorful pop music videos, is based on quick transitions to various places of the stage and twerking (rhythmic movement of the buttocks) combined with waving of the head (and hair). Unexpectedly, the performers are heading towards the proscenium, from which they jump off, and then begin to climb into the audience, overcoming the rows of armchairs over the heads of spectators. They stop at some and disturb their comfort zone, touch them and give them a few seconds of kisses on the lips (both women and men). With this clear gesture, artists manifest the desire to abolish divisions based on sex, the status of the viewer / viewer - actor / actress, inviting the audience to the meta-world.

The cradle suspended on the ceiling, like in the title *deus ex machina*, comes down, automatically moving forward and backward. The fourth performer with a drill in one hand and a bouquet of flowers in the other comes on stage. One of the flowers is placed in the drill instead of a screw, which can be interpreted as a combination of nature and technology, transforming the relationship between man and the environment. Further activities for widening the stage reality will begin with the performers applying VR glasses and performing synchronous activities resembling yoga. The image of the virtual world, to which women move for a while, remains invisible to the viewer.

Belfiore's performance is not only a music video, a visually attractive, pop reality game rebuilt from well-known elements in the ultra new version. The use of technology has democratic and community potential, associated with the ritual. Despite the fact that no one gets a VR set in hand (although we get the *hoveboard* - an automatic skateboard, making the voice of a crying child), the creators present a large amount of technical possibilities. Music video fun, despite the cognitive distance, does not frighten and does not arouse anxiety, rather surprises eccentricity and intrigues. Machines, just like in the Greek tragedy, bring help to the lost humanity, the technicalization of society is not perceived negatively.

The subject area explored by Belfiore seems to be close to the idea of xenofeminism which is gaining increasing popularity. It is an anti-naturalist movement, proclaiming techno-materialism and the struggle to abolish sexual binarism (or rather the restrictions it imposes), which is a utopian form of feminism. Translated into thirteen languages, the manifesto of xenofeminism *Towards alienated politics* [2] reveals in front of the society of late capitalism a vision of a global movement in which gender loses its significance, because the release from an outdated category of nature will enable self-creation of sexual identity. It is also possible with the help of technology and science, carrying the potential of emancipation. One of the main ideas of xenofeminism is the contestation of determinism as a category used for political purposes. Biological norms and the opposition of natural / unnatural words create unjust divisions in the name of predetermined values. Xenofeminists do not like this idea, saying straightforwardly: biology is not destiny [3]. Science is the future and technology is the salvation.

The creators create a techno-cultural utopia on stage, where the division into masculinity and femininity is not important, professional and class segregation does not exist, and human lives in symbiosis with machines. The stage space is constantly transformed, reconfigured and looped. Movement alternately gives way to strictly theatrical activities in a loose frame: interrupting performance of performers in various places of the stage (and the audience) the monologue of one of them is tearful and tacky, and live sentimental song through its seriousness does not fit the whole performance, pointing however its eclectic nature. In terms of choreography, the fight scene is great, which is associated with the aesthetics of manga and comics, according to which invisible forces push the opponent backwards or knock him off his legs. Observing such different, sometimes slightly bizarre activities gives a lot of satisfaction, besides it is being consistent and appealing visually.

Colors of the future - about the performances "Black is the color" and "D3US / X \ M4CHIN4" at BalletOFFFestival 2018

"Transformation" - the slogan of the 5th edition of the BalletOFFFestival organized in Krakow - was at the same time the key to the selection of guest performances and the starting point for the work of artists operating under the care of the Krakow Choreography Center. The fifth edition of the event was enriched with performances from abroad, selected by co-curator Katarzyna Bester.

Guest shows strengthened the international character of the festival, complemented also by annual residences at the Nowa Huta Cultural Center, in which not only artists from Poland, but also from around the world take part. The effects of their work, including *Black is the color*, were presented at the premiere festival. In his choreography, Quan Bui Ngoc closely links the category of transformation with the transformation of a human being, asking, among other things, questions about his evolution and the relationships that connect and divide people. The program of the festival also included performances exploring the future, reflecting on the transfer of people into a world dominated by technology and machinery. Fernando Belfiore in the spectacle *D3US / X \ M4CHIN4* asks, among other things, how our body is transformed then? Are there still feminine and masculine in such a reality, and if so - how are they defined?

Shaping the body following the model of a mediated image in the Belfiore performance takes the shape of a performative science-fiction epic. The audience becomes part of a strange ritual that transforms the present before our eyes, exploring the boundaries of human corporeality with the help of technology. Four performers affirm the future here, expanding the field of the viewer's imagination. *Black is the color*, in which four human bodies are also on the stage, is rather a manifestation of feminine power, energy and spontaneity. Both performances are characterized by remarkable movement based on action with an object. While in *D3US / X \ M4CHIN4* modern machines trigger in the performers additional impulses, opening them to the viewer and each other, Quan Bui Ngoc in his choreography, in turn, seems to close four women behind a metal form, creating a sense of distance and withdrawal of heroines. The artists presenting their work during the 5th edition of BalletOFFFestival provided us with a journey into the unknown, where the imagination of the viewer / viewer is reconfigured, and the visions of the future are constantly updated.

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- freely translated to english with use of machine -