

## YOUNG FEMALE BODY IN BLANK STATE

REPORT - DE VOLKSKRANT MONDAY 10<sup>th</sup> AUGUST 2009

The Flemish disappoint at the Boulevard Theatre festival of Den Bosch. But Eindhoven captivates.

By Annette Embrechts

**Den Bosch** At a silver anniversary there should of course be congratulations and praising words. Theatre Festival Boulevard received plenty of compliments during the opening in Den Bosch from local authorities and theatre bosses.

True: Boulevard - 'The most southerly festival of the north', in the words of director Geert Overdam - knows how to warm a large audience to often surprising productions by adventurous creators.

The Bossche festival audience allows itself almost blindly to be captured by sometimes daring and mysterious human safaris along dark emotions.

Not a single place in the city from which Boulevard is not visible - from the station to the De Gruyter factories (producing chocolate sprinkles). This vastness sometimes hinders the 25 year old festival. There is so much to see that some will invariably be missed.

This happened this weekend too: The Flemish disappointed. This doesn't hamper the organisations' ambitions. The head of culture for Den Bosch revealed on Saturday that he wants to set up a European minded precedent of location theatre with Boulevard. How this will look exactly - the genre is already as diverse as there are locations - remained unsaid.

This year the Flemish - regulars at Boulevard from just over the border - painted the opening weekend. Neither director/theatre writer Arne Sierens (Compagnie Cecilia) nor choreographer Koen Augustijnen (Les Ballets C de la B) honoured their reputation.

Augustijnen confirmed his position in *With Ashes* as the weaker member of the famous group from Gent (in the past home to such as Alain Platel and Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui).

Augustijnen handles the trusted C and B formula (loosely mixed earthly dance through a running, rolling, dancing and rambling ensemble, to heightened music, this time by Handel) without conjuring with it. A couple of ex-Rosas dancers let go in unnatural, indecisive movements.

Fascinating but not a high-flyer is *Apenverdriet* (monkey sorrow) by the well known popular theatre producer Arne Sierens (also from Gent). In his production two fantastic actresses chase each other verbally and physically, through a red-lit, rotating décor with bare wooden walls: de 50 year old Marijke Pinoy (Compagnie Cecelia) and the 30 year old Wine Dierickx (Wunderbaum) take on the roles of stuck women of the same ages. With sucking words by Sierens they mercilessly try to prise each other from the tears of life but the starting point - unwelcome guest stays behind after a party - is too well known from world literature and the theatre repertoire to become original and surprising.

*Apenverdriet* is especially interesting as a physical acting battle between two sparkling actresses. Meanwhile the trio WAK plays an absurd parody on manly heroism in the 'tentjes' theatre at the Paradeplein: *Nothing is really difficult*.

Three hyped-up blokes stumble almost wordlessly over all the entrances and exits of their décor. Their greatest enemy - losing face- constantly looks at them, grinning.

In everything a female counterpart is the premiere of the fantastically vulnerable *Who Cycle* by United C. Although this multimedia collection from Eindhoven within small circles is known for its underground style performances, it now presents the young, naked, unblemished female body in its blank state of lonely seduction.

These four nude studies, the last one of which occurs amongst hundreds of broken beer glasses, remain captivating through the subtle alternation between intro - and extrovert movements.

*Who Cycle* proves that Theatre Festival Boulevard - with more than twenty locations in the city - is becoming an evermore important portal to a bigger audience for local producers from Brabant.