

Spring Forward dance for changing times...

24-27 April 2014, Umeå

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Springback

Elle Sofe Henriksen, Sápmi/Norway
Beatnaga ii galgga gulgii geahccat - trio 35m
Magnetic North

I felt I 'got' Sami choreographer Elle Sofe Henriksen's *Beatnaga ii galgga gulgii geahccat*. Just don't ask me to try to spell from memory let alone pronounce the title of this first of two female trios that kicked off Spring Forward in Umea, Sweden. Initially clad in zip-up tops, plimsolls and fluted-skirt dresses, two sturdy blondes and a smaller Asian woman – all defiantly curious – roamed a vast stage selectively strewn with stones and what may've been an upstage smattering of bark (and at one point they literally barked and howled while crunch-stepping over this brown substance). These earthy, girlish witches seemed to be trying to summon the spirit of nature itself. Resonant, and possibly not quite like anything I've seen before...

Donald Hutera
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Elle Sofe Henriksen, Sápmi/Norway
Improvisation - 15m

In this perfectly-paced and considered short work a woman enters dressed in modern black clothes and traditional moleskin shoes. She lies down on fake grass and becomes the land. Wind, bells and voices fill the air. In her undulations is a sense of the ancient; in her momentum, the mythological. With hair hanging down around her and breathing like a lost yeti, her eyes remain unafraid. She's joined by another woman singing mesmerising Sami songs. Accompanying them both, by now, are audience members tapping on cushions; some don't manage to get one and look oddly bereft. This circle is all connected and transported within five short minutes. How simple is the action to make us feel as one. Loved it.

Sally Marie
[@sallymarie88](#)

On a Sunday morning, amidst an exhibition at Vasterbottens Museum, choreographer Elle Sofe Henriksen and dancer Kristin Ryg Helgebostad give us evidence that a ritual can be improvised anywhere and whenever. We're welcomed into a holy half-circle, embraced in the jaws of a wild beast's cavern. A birth will happen; at the same time ancestors are evoked in a trance atmosphere. Henriksen sings a throaty Sami song as we pat pillows like a mum does on baby's back to help him/her fall asleep. Meanwhile Helgebostad, in a studded leather jacket, embodies spirits of nature in a deliriously rock-concert way. I'm kidnapped by the fusion of softness and primitive roughness, a shake-up of tradition and contemporaneity as if aboard a ship crossing time. By following its route we stumble after our fathers and mothers in flesh and blood, more present than ever.

Chiara Organtini

A sunny Sunday, late morning at the Vasterbottens Museum. Comfortably curved round a multi-coloured tubular 'fire,' we spectators face a platform backed by flat reproductions of 6 thousand year-old rock carvings. With lurches, growls and full-bodied vibrations the long blonde-haired dancer Kristin Ryg Helgebostad responds to and, at times, becomes these primitive drawings and their accompanying natural sounds (birds, wind, scraping tools). Choreographer Elle Sofe Henriksen, similarly garbed in casual-contemporary with nods to tradition, joins us. Her guttural vocalisations, called yoiking, are an aural conjuring of her Sami ancestry. Without fuss these shamanistic performers guide us into baby-soft cushion-patting that gently shifts into a heftier tom-tom beat. We, too, help summon spirits. Neatly and effortlessly achieved, believably felt, memorable.

Donald Hutera
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Photo by Stephen Hutton

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