

Contemporary Dance's Renovators?

Final-year Performance *Springbrett* (Spring Board) shows that there is much talent and desire to renew amongst the choreography students, Sidsel Pape believes.

By Sidsel Pape

The same week as the folk dance-based Frikar premiers at the Opera, the final-year students present in choreography at the Oslo National Academy of the Arts (KHiO) their whole afternoon piece *Springbrett* for the first time at Dansens Hus. Amongst them: folk dancer Sigurd Johan Heide.

The title *Springbrett* (Spring board) demonstrates that the students Paulo Fernandes Junior, Elle Sofe Henriksen and Sigurd Johan Heide will leap into a life of choreography following this performance. It could be debated whether such a student performance should be reported. When KHiO use Dansens Hus to present the event, this signals that the performance is considered professional enough, as dance art. The author believes that *Springbrett* stands up against criticism and handles comparisons with such cultural heights.

Sado-psalm song

Springbrett continues as a multicultural evening with Elle Sofe Henriksen's Beatnagge ii galgga gulgii geahččat, Northern Sámi for 'Appearances are Deceptive'. If it is possible to compare such diverse forms of artistic dance expressions as in *Springbrett*, then this evening's highlight is both choreographic and musical. The composers Pia Møller Johansen and Torgeir Vassvik's sound-painting lie layer upon layer with conversation in Sami, joik, psalm and electronics in addition to the uninhibited dog sounds which the three dancers themselves bring into the picture. The choreography is also layered with physical expressions and gestures, partly improvised and partly choreographed.

Hanna Mjåvatn fra Dansefeber debuted as theatrical contemporary dancer and dog in Henriksen's performance. She demonstrates that she has a strong stage presence and a dance technique at the same level as the two other dancers. All three are beautifully organic in the dance and go into and out of unison movements without losing their succulence. Amongst many tragicomic scenes, the sado-psalm song stands out. One dancer is slapped hard over the whole body whilst she sings a psalm song by J. V. Vikman translated into Sámi. Thereafter, the dancers continue to throw themselves around the stage in what are probably traditional Sámi underwear.

Wild and Untamed

Slightly unclear is how Henriksen stands in respect to her Sámi background, if the performance pays homage to or critiques the minority culture she is a part of. Risking exoticising the Sámi element, Henriksens contribution stands out as a free display of female wildness and untamed power. Seldom does one see choreographers, contemporary dance included, which doesn't attempt at least once to satisfy the male gaze with sexualised female bodies and costumes.

It is well worth marking the names of Sigurd Johan Heide, Ello Sofe Henriksen and Paulo Fernandes Junior. They have much in their hearts, they have the capacity to renew contemporary dance and they can draw new audiences to their art.