

Beatnaga ii galgga gulgii geahcat
Appearances are Deceptive by Elle Sofe Henriksen

Have we arrived at the Sámi fight-club? In the large space we see a stone mound, a column with sawdust, and thin felled trees. The simple elements of the scenery are well placed and between them we see three women warm up, both their own bodies and the public, with their challenging and playful glances. There is something in the air.

Right from the prologue, the performance slides seamlessly into action. From everyday actions across the room to the evocative ancient voices take over the young woman's resonant bodies. The distant but still so present joik (Sámi way of singing) activates the dancers. Movements become like answers, shamanic vibrations that travel between them. Marianne Kjærund and Hanna Mjåvatn dance a unique duet. From deep and bent legs they gather power while their heads blabber nonsense. The whirls take over the hands that seem to want to embrace the sky. Where are you?

Dog-like howls and soaring cries stretch over the landscape, past the painful hills of existence. We are all influenced by animal instincts irrespective of whether one wears green, blue or red clothes. The humping spreads like sexual mechanics – the repetition exhausts and builds meaning. The dancers give in and brutal energy mixes with human fragility. The choreography develops organically in falls and leaps.

We get a lot of thinking-time but meaningful at the same, and we remain fixated to the script with its absurd jerks and amusing turn of events. Hanna's restless energy leads to boxing at the air. It appears a little severe when the dancer Kristin Ryg is exposed to extensive slapping; she gets beaten but cannot stop singing. The sequence is not however loaded with meaningless violence without posing imminent questions and prayers. The body gives us an answer! The choreographer Elle Sofe Henriksen strikes a good balance between soundscape and silence. She draws out the pauses when they are charged with exhaustion, breathing-space or expectations. The timing is very effective.

The dancers are individuals but experience the same journey. Someone has already gone before them and some of them have to take the next step. The choreographer has chosen the most fateful and dramatic line, diagonal to the left corner, as the work's final passage. Heads tilted towards the earth, and crouched humbly on their knees, each and every dancer brings the work to its conclusion, over soft round stones that cast sharp shadows. The mountain plateau exists, communication between generations and individuals exists, and the choreographer's personal vision emanates over this well made work. Girl-power rules and the ancestors listen.

Virpi Pahkinen, Oslo 10/5 2010