

Sharon Vazanna: Good Children & High

HANA STREJČKOVÁ, 07.05.2022 9:00

After a long hiatus, Israeli, globally established choreographer Sharon Vazanna came to the Czech Republic, to the UFFO multifunctional cultural house in Trutnov, to perform two of her works - Good Children & High - in one evening only. Those who visited both performances on Sunday evening were treated to an exceptional artistic experience, a close encounter with a leading representative of the Israeli dance platform.

The work - duet High, free from scenography and lyricism, immersed in dark tones, relied on the gradual building of tension of relationship turbulence. The inspiration of the bird kingdom was evident in the movement details and body postures, as well as in the way the couple communicated. Choreographer Sharon Vazanna created a structure in which the female solo was first observed to develop into a spirited dialogue, culminating in a male dance solo. The tactilely symbiotic pair clashed, particularly in their hand work. Tamar Sonn and Shmuel Halfon heavily engaged each other's touch in the form of supports, bounces and in manipulation. They exhibited in front of each other in the form of gestural accents referring to the courtship of feathered creatures, uniting as one body, or their bodies became a space for the other. And there was no shortage of bold colours, this time even an aluminium sheen adhering to the body. In High there was pure choreography and dance, dynamically driven and stirred by the pulse of the moment.

Good Children's performance also exhibited a spare yet incredibly powerful visuality, permeating the space with passion and fierceness with every movement. At no point did the production slip into ornamental postscripts, artfully oscillating between humour and

punchiness, deflecting pathos with self-irony. One of the principles of the work seemed to be a conscious work with opposites, imperceptible cuts between the performances contrasted with static images held in tension, and technically advanced dance was also mixed with the rawness of physical theatre. The disposition of the performers (Gary Reagan, Tal Nof, Shmuel Halfon) was admirable. Choreographer Vazanna has found a functional visual-physical way to communicate duplicity, i.e., how to endearingly portray the "cruelty of children," how to non-illustratively rely on their directness and almost egocentric expression in parallel to the world of adult individuals, their polemics of identity and freedom.

The scene was dominated by an original artifact, a hanging decadence, an extravagant chandelier made of ballet tips stood out in a pinkish haze of light and mist. It transformed with each upward glance, creating a long associative line, from clichés and platitudes like "having a professional life on the hook" (or did someone even see "pieces of meat"?), to metaphors of bondage, balletic renunciation and perfectionism, to an aesthetic of pain crammed into the cane of a danced shoe. The interconnectedness of the scenic object with the action was evidenced by the bundle of ballet shoes that the trio of dancers passed around with great fervor, and the toes were also significantly inscribed in the character of the dancer, wrapping her hands and dealing with a series of paradoxes. For example, although they "decorated" her hands, her feet still held their form.

The distinctively coloured costumes emphasised individuality, body contours and correlation with the dance environment (leotard, tutu and high men's leggings) and influenced the range of movement, even transforming bodies as a mask, shelter, disguise. The longest and most voluminous dress, resembling, among other things, a giant lampshade, became a challenge to the lanky, sinewy body of dancer Gary Reagan. His gestures, softened in the palms with supple wrists, lived up to the

tips of his slender fingers. His long arms responded gracefully to the slashing lines of his contemporaries, or conversely, he responded to their synchronicities or more fluid variations with precisely defined isolations. The register of frequently used elements included open mouths, knees and elbows that guided, tilted, bent, folded to the ground, connected and differentiated the bodies of the versatile dancers. Articulated bends shaped the interstitial spaces at various angles.

In imaginary chapters, the performance flowed into one point each time, a central totem, a statuesque expressive pose under the chandelier. At that moment, the performers, each different, stitched into three levels of height, resembled curious little rascals with sparkling restlessness. Their physical actions evoked immediate reactions or connotations. There was a withdrawal on a switch, a bend in the knees on an *écarté* rolled backwards, or the other dancer's leg rose even higher. As one performer extended his hooves and his toes curled into points, the other set his feet perpendicular to the ground; while one moved in a swaying gait, the other set his stride in a *pas de bourrée*; to the arabesque and elongated positions came the response of a contortion; against the outstretched fingers came fists; to the spasmodically clenched lips of the dancer, men rose to kiss together. The mutually provoking contemporaries, regardless of gender, flaunted arched hooves, elasticity of range, but also communicated clenched, hunched and forceful, and added to this, even in moments of independent airflow, they were fully aware of their place amongst each other, a full stage presence.

Melancholy was replaced by sarcasm, nostalgia was crowded out by reality, comedy competed with tragedy. The sophisticated dramaturgy of *Good Children* did not let the pace of the performance fall,

interspersing it with the principles of children's plays to stimulate the energy, as if the performers were not only building together, but at the same time tearing down each other's building blocks of childhood memories and dreams.

Sharon Vazanna & Body In Dance Group (Israel)

GOOD CHILDREN

Choreography by Sharon Vazanna

Dancers: Gary Reagan, Shmuel Halfon, Tal Nof

Artistic direction by Mate Moray, Itzik Galili

Created for Curtain Up Dance Festival 2019.

HIGH

Choreography by Sharon Vazanna

Dancers: Tamar Sonn, Shmuel Halfon

Artistic Direction by Elad Schechter - C.A.T.A.M.O.N

The hosting was made possible with the support of the Embassy of the State of Israel.

Written from a single performance in the Czech Republic on April 24, 2022, UFFO Trutnov.