

Female primordial force in feminist circus



The world premiere of the circus performance Gynoïdes – circus female intelligentsia has opened at Orienteatern. It's a feminist circus art project which later will tour internationally. It explores norms and representation of women in circus art.



The whole project is a reaction to the objectification of female bodies in circus art and the stereotypes generally appearing in this art form: a whole-evening circus performance, combining artistic research and social action.

In the warm premises, we're initially met by an acoustic harp and a woman with a serious face in the middle of the room. The atmosphere is condensed, and soon the six international elite circus artists in identical body-coloured underwear enter the bare stage, displaying exceptional female power and singular abilities to extend the limitations of their bodies. Free from female attributes like make-up and glittering stage costumes, their bodies and persons have a natural presence, with the lustre concentrated to artistic expression in the movements and the eyes

They relate physically to their accessories, they turn rings of different sizes, chairs hoisted up in the air, ropes and textiles alive by making them part of their bodies, speeding up their gravitation forces. Artist: Veera Kaijainen Photo: Einar Kling Odencrants



The women in Gynoïdes are wonderfully free from the objectification that female circus artists traditionally are often exposed to writes Nike Markelius. Artist: Sophie Duncan Photo: Einar Kling Odencrants

They relate physically to their accessories, they turn rings of different sizes, chairs hoisted up in the air, ropes and textiles alive by making them part of their bodies, speeding up their gravitation forces. With exuberant playfulness and glowing intensity, they bring us close to the art and its essence. Sometimes I lose my breath out of excitement !

Gynoïdes is circus art rending space and free scope to a strong and beautiful ensemble, in more ways than one. Being brilliantly skillful in their different numbers, the circus artists also saturate the room with rare warmth and female soulfulness; their beings emanate so much of their personalities that I finally feel like knowing all of them. On top of that, the suggestive music and the innovative soundscapes are deeply integrated in the show. On a balcony above the stage sits the celebrated overtone singer and voice artist Anna-Maria Hefele, alternately singing and playing acoustic harp or hurdy-gurdy in wholesome interplay with the artists below her, who also use their own voices and body sounds by microphones close to their bodies, using their bodies to trigger and move to drum loops and beats by detectors.

During the course of the evening, they undergo a kind of liberation process. There is a scene in the beginning where they all gather behind a large curtain; at first we perceive them as whispered shadows, and when they emerge they have transformed into robots, moving mechanically to steely sounds. After that a long sequence of solo numbers follow, individually refined for each character. Sade Kamppila performs a dizzyingly lithe acrobatic dance on the floor, accompanied by her own voice and breathing; then she stands on her head, simultaneously playing ukulele. She also plays eager clarinet while Veera Kaijanen walks upon an ascending cord across the whole room.



Artist: Laura Lippert Photo: Einar Kling Odencrants

In a wonderful extended number, the artists execute a collective skipping-rope dance, and I didn't know that one you could jump rope with such amounts of joy, imagination, artistry and skill. The most surprising number of the evening is executed by the innovative artist Laura Lippert. She's a master of the uncommon circus art of hair-hanging, and has developed her own acrobatics number, hanging in her hair from a large hook, which is hoisted up toward the ceiling in the amazing final.

The women in Gynoïdes are wonderfully free from the objectification that female circus artists traditionally are often exposed to, and appear as supreme body artists, displaying authority and soul in their expressions. The evening becomes a poetic and striking tribute to the primordial forces of woman, but also an inquisitive, norm-critical interpretation of circus in our time.

Nike Markelius

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