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Through your eyes: dancing to a dancer's gaze (‘Gaze is a gap is a ghost’, Daniel Linehan)



'How was that performance yesterday?' Always a good sign, if you can't come up with an answer right away. Well, eumhh... It was a dance performance, but not really a dance performance, as the three girls on stage were singing and sort of acting as well. It was about trying to make the audience see what a dancer sees on stage, but as that is quite impossible, it was not only about that. 'But was it good?' Well, eumhh... It was irritating at times, but in the end I guess I liked it. *Gaze is a gap is a ghost*, by Belgium-based American choreographer Daniel Linehan, artiste associé/associated artist at deSingel, Antwerp.

From the moment you see empty chairs on that video screen – without any members of the audience - you know: so, what I'm seeing on that screen on stage is not really what that dancer is looking at, right now. Because that is what you believe at first, because it is what *Gaze is a gap is a ghost* promises to do: to show what a dancer is seeing as he (she) is dancing. No: the video footage is not *in real time*. You're looking at a prerecorded version of this performance, and the dancers are dancing *to* that version. Which actually makes the video a fourth 'dancer' – one the dancers have to dance in unison with – and therefore makes this performance even more interesting to watch.



But maybe I'm leapfrogging here. First things first: American dancer/choreographer Daniel Linehan moved to Brussels in 2008, where he completed the Research Cycle at P.A.R.T.S. He states that his choreographic work is 'intent on softly obscuring the line that separates dance from everything else'. During the 2012-2013 season he is *artiste associé* at deSingel (Antwerp), which means he will present several performances there. He is *new wave associate* at Sadler's Wells (London; 2012-2014) as well, and *choreographer in residence* at l'Opéra de Lille (2013-2016).

Softly obscuring the line that separates dance from everything else? It's a nice way to describe *Gaze is a gap is a ghost*, which premiered at deSingel. Sure, there's a choreographic component in this performance, but I would say that it is more about movement than dance. In a way you could say that *Gaze is a gap is a ghost* is some sort of investigation into all the elements that make up a performance; how you can unite them, or you can use them to create some friction.



It's as if Linehan, as children do, takes each element, turns it around, looks at it, and puts it down again. Some acting, some dancing and some singing. You could say the video turns out to be some sort of soundtrack, which the dancers are dancing to (by following it or deliberately not following it). And then there's a soundtrack, which the dancers are singing to. How do I set a mood? What is needed to tell a story? How do I trigger the imagination of the audience? Questions you feel that have popped up during the rehearsal process.

I guess this element of 'investigation' in *Gaze is a gap is a ghost* might drive some of you crazy. And I must admit some parts of the performance took too long, or were not up to par (the part during which the camera leaves the room and goes for a trip in the building really took too long at the Antwerp première). But during other moments you feel the mind of a smart choreographer, and I couldn't help wondering what *Gaze is a gap is a ghost* would have looked like if it had been performed by three experienced dancers from, let's say, the Forsythe Company.

So yeah, difficult to describe, but I guess I liked it. Linehan will document his year at deSingel in a book, *A no can make space*.

Tourschedule [here](#). Linehan is blogging about his year at deSingel [here](#).

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