

PZAZZ – Lieve Dierckx – Kiss The One We Are – Première

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<https://www.pzazz.theater/nl/recensies/dans/waarom-dans-ik-waarom-leef-ik>

Kiss The One We Are

DANIEL LINEHAN / HIATUS

Why do I dance? Why do I live?

No, there is no s missing from the title of "Kiss The One We Are," Daniel Linehan's new choreography. 'The One' here represents the group of nine performers as a unit and home. That's how I saw it. 'The one' is also that one circular shape that appears in ever new guises, during the performance and throughout life.

The title says something about the Daniel Linehan's sensitivity to language. In the 2007 solo "Not about everything," the first work he showed in our country, language was already the nexus of his movement. It was a pointed play of language, humor and rhythmic movement: as the choreographer spun obsessively around his own axis, he talked about everything he didn't want to talk about, yet suggested via that detour what his (choreographic) motivations are. In later work, text and text rhythm remained a constant, both in rehearsal processes and performances and publications.

So it is extraordinary that there is little text in "Kiss The One We Are" - one sentence to be exact. It does come in as an upercut: "I don't know what my future holds after this weekend, and I don't care," sings Anneleen Keppens. That quote from a Björk song follows a wild dance party on stage. With those words, she sums up a tragic perspective. The inscription "Eat / Sleep / Rave / Repeat" that can be read in colorful letters on the back of Omagbitse Omagbemi's costume echoes it. They are words that reflect the hopelessness of many young people today.

In the same breath, that one phrase keeps the rave we just saw away from non-committal presentation or "demonstrating the demonstration of your own full being" with which Wouter Hillaert sees dance and theater makers moving beyond theater as a medium in "No, I don't just dance along. You can read the text at <https://e-tcetera.be/nee-ik-dans-niet-zomaar-mee/>.

That 'full being' may permeate 'Kiss The One We Are,' but still, the relationship between presentation and representation is perfectly fine here because the 'being' of the nine dyed-in-the-wool performers is the result of inner digging into the sources of their dances. Four years ago, Linehan already engaged in the same quest in his solo "Body of Work," a pared-down performance in which he shares with the audience his own motivations through dance and personal memories.

In "Kiss The One We Are," he gives that quest additional reach, not only through the power of number, but also through the background of the performers. Linehan invited four performers from Berlin's Dance On Ensemble. That ensemble brings together dancers who are past forty - unfortunately, that apparently still counts as overage even in contemporary dance. Here, Ziv Frenkel is already past sixty and Jone San Martin, who once shined with William Forsythe, will soon follow him. Together with two other Dance On members, Omagbitse Omagbemi and Javier Arozena, they represent a wealth of dance experience as well as life experience in this performance.

Alongside them we recognize four dancers from previous performances by Daniel Linehan: Anneleen Keppens, Louise Tanoto, Gorka Gurrutxaga and the youngest, Jean-Baptiste Portier. Linehan himself also briefly joins in when, at the edge of the stage very close to a microphone, he extracts sound from a small African plucked instrument. The ninth performer on stage is a case in point: Noa Liev served as a consultant in Linehan's previous performances is now artistic assistant. He is also a doctor of psychology, Science Po alumnus, artist, author, spiritual counselor, shaman, performer and winner of two Bessie Awards.

In "Kiss The One We Are," he sets the tone in the semi-darkness of the Manhattan Studio. On stage, the nine performers lie, sit or stand among five bare trees. At the back left, a gold curtain overlaps the corner between the back and side walls. A large, white circle is limned in the middle of the floor. At the center is a bowl. In front, a low table with stones, twigs, pieces of wood on it. These are still returning. To the left - now they don't stand out - buckets, barrels and logs with which the performers will soon create an ecological wasteland and new life.

I refuse to see them as naive feel-gooders

A performer enters the circle to light fire in the bowl there. As the flame awakens our attention to what is to come, time is allowed to stand still for a moment. Only after a few minutes does Noa Liev spring into action. He was already ready in dressmaker's seat on the edge of the circle. Now he raises a hand drum in the air and sets a slow rhythm of védragenous sounds with it. A moment later his head starts shaking wildly back and forth. With his tongue far out of his wide-open mouth, he makes cries until the whole room vibrates. Thus he evokes a deep carpet pad of memories, in a shamanic ritual of primal forces and early life.

The other performers undergo it, as do we, until at the front of the darkness one of them simultaneously raises two legs from the side position and then raises the rest of his body. A sequence of angular movements ensues in which spirals simultaneously travel through his body, as ancient as the sounds of the drum. Someone puts a hand on his leg that starts a sequence that extends to all the dancers. They support, push and carry, or provoke counteractions with their full weight to a sound background of low, long-held organ sounds. Circling around each other, they move across the stage in tangles. It could be a new version of "Le Sacre," with teeming organisms coming back to life here. That association continues when the group of dancers carry one of them around like a sacrifice above their heads.

It is the first of a series of atmospheres that follow one another, with the dancers evolving into ever more individuality. We hear a vintage song about wings and flying ('Up, Up and Away by the Ray Conniff Singers) on which Ziv Frenkel indulges in memories of his childhood in musical mode. Elsewhere an upbeat pop song after which the soundscape continues to do its work with subtle references to Indie or Latin rhythms.

Invariably, the performers hold our attention. They move relaxed, all friendly, without a trace of dominance or aggression. They hop, spin around, wave their arms, sometimes all mixed up together. Occasionally, someone settles on a bench near the audience. They look at us with broad smiles; their mood is infectious. It is wonderful to follow their individuality, their willfulness too, as when Omagbitse Omagbemi joins a group circle on her own time, no sooner. She shows her character. Through all their dance technical baggage, the group of performers present themselves first and foremost as people, and I believe them. Designer Frédéric Denis' costumes underscore that humanity: the frayed heart on a T-shirt, the loose strips of a braid on the costume.

However, those bursts of dancing joy, the seemingly chaotic laps they run, also leave room for more formal dance. Nice how in their organically formed constellations a rhythm creeps here and there that they synchronize with other members of the group.

Past the halfway point, after the rave, a fault line emerges. The performers stand there looking somewhat bedraggled, each to his or her own, as if unsure how to proceed. Anneleen Keppens comes to the rescue. She looks around, raises her eyebrows and goes to fetch a bucket at the side of the stage. It turns out to be filled with sand, which she pours out in the center of the circle, in a straight line with nice ridges. The others follow: with each barrel and bucket, they make the lane wider and wider. They sprinkle the sand under the bare trees - we now see that floating just above the floor. The sprinkling stops only when the whole stage is a sandy plain, a desert it seems. But nothing is lost. In the warm, dark ochre color, the original rock still glistens, and in the light from four floor spotlights to the side, rising dust dances.

After the performers then place the logs in the sand with the stones and wood from the small altar on top, a new primal ritual begins. Hand in hand, the performers form a new circle on top of the first one that was wiped out. By stepping forward, toward each other, and then sliding their feet back, they create on the floor what looks like an Aztec symbol, a new sun for a new cosmic order. With a new tenderness as their lingua franca: in their interactions, in the attentive hands with which they touch each other, in the intimacy with which they perform a duet or circle the stage with movement.

Together, they create hold and a safe nest on stage - to which their age and baggage never detracts, quite the contrary. And no, I refuse to see them as naive feel-gooders. That we spectators are only too happy to follow them is evidenced by the many times we call them back for applause.