

## **Gender Bender Festival – Bologna**

I am not a dance art expert or a fan, so what I am writing here is not a ballet performance critique. Even though I feel an urge to write something about a performance that took place at the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> International festival Gender Bender.

Five dancers of five different nationalities introduced a cheerful ironic and somewhat mysterious choreographic show that makes you wait until the very end – which is astonishing – to reveal it's true theme of the story: the violent tendencies of men.

It is an episode from a black chronicle - the story took place in Sao Paolo, Brazil and the whole discussion about the roots of violence is based on it. It is a depiction of core male nature, that is the identity of a man characterized by his dominant desires.

It is not about a random case of violence, that is part of man's nature – and I need to add, heterosexual man's. It is an ambitious contemplation that brings us to the roots of patriarchy and the world we are living in today.

The choreographers Jozef Fruček and Linda Kapetanea created a theatrical experience with dancers that are not only professionally great but also show their sensuality. It is an exciting element that is trying to suggest that violence can't be blindly neglected. Everyone of us feels some kind of delight from violence.

The excitement that overtakes the audience does not end here. The story from the black chronicle is focusing on a fight, where the victim is a defenceless man lying dead on the ground. It is also focusing on the presence of random bystanders, that don't do anything to stop it. The audience embodies the role of "passive bystanders" in this show. It is presented with an unspoken question, a moral imperative that needs an answer and that leads me to write: "Why don't you do something?"

It is a portrayal and critique of violence and the forms of theatrical execution are shared by the dancers, that commit the atrocities and the audience that just silently watches.

I think that the choreographers Jozef Fruček and Linda Kapatanea are trying to suggest that the show is putting everyone on stage without an exception. No one is excluded. Everyone is an accomplice.

Simply amazing.

*Maurizio Cecconi*