

WORK IN PROGRESS.

Keith Stewart

In 2016 I was invited to take part in the South East Dance programme – Dance Ambassadors programme (www.southeastdance.org.uk). An opportunity for non-dance people such as me to experience dance. I was invited to see the Belgian dance artist Vera Tussing at the intimate Dance Studio. I am always happy when I attend something and haven't read the background. All I saw was dance and thought "o.k."

This was a magical, stimulating and thought provoking afternoon with Vera and Esse as we explored with them a work in progress. There were about ten of us in the audience. Intimate. Connected and in the moment. It is such an honour to be allowed into the thought processes of artists. And especially when they are playing with and developing ideas.

Vera and Esse are Dance Artists from Belgium. This was their first time in Brighton. They have performed across Europe and usually London. Their work has moved through stages in their exploration of their dance – sight and now the physical. Safely wrapped in the imagination of dance and expression I was able to exclude the dreary May rain. I was entranced from the beginning. They showed us four pieces and each time we were able to be inside their thoughts. In addition, share our reflections that could help them think about how to grow the work. They move in "duoglide" ceaseless and creaseless harmony. It is wonderful to watch two women who are so in tune with each other and for whom touch and movement together is energy. We were given permission from the start to be part of this process. To speak, to take part in a dance, to change our angle and move to other parts of the studio. We had ownership of the space and this participation is integral to their work. The audience is done with not done to. They helped make this dance experience accessible to me on a physical and emotional level. Even bringing us all into parts of the dance -touching fingertip to fingertip with the dancers. I enjoyed collaborating with other audience members to narrate their movements in one piece. Some of their work is shown to audience members who are blind and use their vast array of other senses and methods to feel the dance. Touches such as braille notes designed by various artists increase participation and understanding. Contemporary dance of this calibre offers so many opportunities to break barriers and create avenues. Watching two women dance together without the male lead raises questions. How often do you see women dance without men leading? The women are the flexible feminine input. While the men are the "strong anchor". Or so we are taught to accept.

Movement like this reflects and challenges some of the "isms" of Society. This graceful, strong, solid, confident pair reword some of that language. I experience this as "movement" and more than "dance".

WALK WITH DANCE.

Dance for me was always jumping up and down to the latest or oldest disco classic. This experience allowed me to break down my barriers about dance being "arty farty" and immerse myself in movement. And in process. To imagine what this movement means to me. Even calling the experience "movement" allows me to feel more in it. And how others might experience it. And to be part of the endless flow to influence creativity. The dance they are creating will be shown around Europe and I hope one day in Brighton. If not maybe we will get another chance to reflect on their work. I sit in my cafe writing with renewed inspiration, colours, and the flow of movement around me and a slice of carrot cake. Stillness and harmony.

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