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Vera Tussing – Mazing – London

By Siobhan Murphy on April 12, 2017 in Reviews · 0 Comments



Vera Tussing's *Mazing*.
© Alessandra Roccherri. (Click image for larger version)

Vera Tussing

Mazing

★★★★☆

London, The Place

7 April 2017

veratussing.wixsite.com/mysite

www.theplace.org.uk

If you like to keep an arm's distance between you and the contemporary dance you're watching, then Vera Tussing is probably not for you. *Mazing*, the last in a trilogy of pieces created by the German-born dancer and choreographer, is all about audience interaction – at times almost testing us to see what we might refuse.



Vera Tussing's *Mazing*.
© Alessandra Roccherri. (Click image for larger version)

Divested of our shoes, we are arranged on chairs around a performance space. Tussing and her four co-creators move around in an undulating mass, with one

dancer in the centre being guided by the others, who in turn move in response to her movements. Each time someone shouts “reset” the lights change. With this premise of kinetic transfers of energy thus established, the dancers disperse and start approaching audience members – asking them to hold them, keep them off axis, change their weight, push them off into the space, use the dancer as a footrest, or submit to being sat on or lain across. We’re asked to grip dancers by their charity-shop-style fluffy jumpers and propel them down the line of seats. Dancers hang from rope straps and are swung across the space by audience members pushing on their outstretched hand.

Resistance and support are under examination here, in a lighthearted way. It’s fun to feel a transfer of your energy feed into someone else’s movement – the same appeal that makes couples dancing so addictive. Then Tussing and co up the ante – one female dancer removes her top, one male dancer whips off his pants, then the group begins a writhing procession down two sides of our square of seats, still using audience members to push off their movements. You can feel the slightly panicked charge of a British audience suddenly up close and personal with naked bits. But everyone very politely puts up with it. It might have been more fun for everyone else just left sat watching if they hadn’t.



Vera Tussing's *Mazing*.

© Alessandra Roccheri. (Click image for larger version)

Speakers are wheeled around behind us – the emphasis of the piece starts to shift as the soundscape morphs into more discernible tracks. The dancers move more towards propelling themselves around the space, which eventually becomes a techno-filled nightclub, with each performer letting loose on the dancefloor. At this point you start to wonder where the thread of the piece has gone – more so when seven audience members are moved, with their chairs, into the central space and just left, while the dancers hang from straps. This is definitely more experimental inquiry than polished dance offering and, at an hour long, sags at times. But it has a certain charm and reminds you quite strikingly about the consoling and stimulating power of touch – a nudge that a lot of us in this digital age could do with.