

# Review of *Weak Dance Strong Questions*

Silje Birgitte Folkedal , Bergensavisen, Norway, 28th October 2001

## Challenging Dance

Two quite ordinary men in ordinary clothes doing quite extraordinary movements. This is perhaps the most exciting choreography in Europe right now, and challenges the idea of what dance is or can be.

With solid backgrounds in, respectively, classical dance and experimental theatre, Jonathan Burrows (41) and Jan Ritsema (56) deliver a performance which definitely asks more questions than it answers. The performance is chewed to the bone, minimalistic in its use of theatrical elements. Narrowed down to the human body, its possibilities and limitations, they mould the stage into a laboratory. The audience are participants in some kind of demonstration-lecture on the subject 'sometimes you have to close your eyes to see better'.

What are the most natural patterns of movement for a human being if you subtract the inherent cultural restrictions on how to use them? And is there a natural, fluent body language?

Forget all expectations of dance. The pattern is that there is no pattern. Stripped down to cryptic yet simple movements, the only thing left is deconstruction, stretched to its furthest.

## Without will, and unusual

The two dancers clearly show the influence of Merce Cunningham's thoughts and explorations into movement - the search for pure movement. The focus remains on the two men, moving up and down, back and forth, around, against and from each other, seemingly inside bodies which haven't been put together properly. It becomes both absurd and funny, because it is unlikely and completely unpredictable.

For those who are genuinely interested in contemporary dance this is definitely today's curriculum performance. The lack of will in what the two performers, coincidentally, seem to do on this naked stage, triggers a provocation and forces us to reflect on what dance is. This is where the title *Weak Dance Strong Questions* contributes with meaning.

Is it this provocation that confronts us with the question why in the world we're sitting here through a 50-minute long performance? Because the strongest questions are asked in the dance itself, where a graspable form of meaning is being created and becomes possible from what we see.

Silje Birgitte Folkedal