



Birmingham Royal Ballet : "City of a Thousand Trades", c. Miguel Altunaga (ph. J. Persson)

of a Birmingham poet intoning the most appalling nonsense and the limited and inexpressive movement vocabulary make a combination immune to their considerable efforts – it was painful to see their ballet-trained aerial bodies forced into the ground-based dance style. Acosta's London debut as BRB company director rang loud alarm bells even at such an early juncture with a programme of quite astounding mediocrity.

Gerald Dowler

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## Company Aldes

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### Roberto Castello, Anarchy in Hell

*Inferno* – chor. Roberto Castello, mus. Marco Zanotti with Andrea Taravelli

Turin (Italy), Teatro Astra (as part of 'Palcoscenico Danza')

'Hell' is certainly the most enticing *cantica* of Dante's *Divine Comedy*, a synthesis of the passions and the crimes of humanity, both eternal and outside time itself. And what exactly is our hell today?

According to the Italian choreographer and director Roberto Castello, in the third millennium, anguish is found no longer beyond the grave but here, from our own egos which unleash themselves throughout our existences in the quest for success, material gain and victories in the frantic race of life.

Castello proves himself unwavering in his belief, consistently sarcastic and anarchical and abetted by an excellent group of four

female and two bearded and long-haired male dancers, each possessing his or her own particular character and physicality, alongside a mistress of ceremonies, Alessandra Moretti, expressing herself in a discourse on art in pseudo-Brazilian.

The dancers appear one after the other in a dark moor where crows fly, leafless trees strangely seeming to sway (the landscape of

a projected video). They appear condemned to execute a series of gestures and poses, unable able to free themselves from them.

A more intimate moment follows, dancers clad in slippers and dressing gown, with that residual sleepiness that leads you to hang around the house unnecessarily. Then, dressed as one should to visit a contemporary art exhibition, pointing out works in the

Aldes Company : "Inferno", c. Roberto Castello (ph. P. Porto)



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## Rambert

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### Surrealism à la Vandekeybus

*Draw from Within* – ch. Wim Vandekeybus, mus. varied

Paris, Théâtre du Châtelet (& Théâtre de la Ville)

Wim Vandekeybus enjoys studying human reactions to danger and extreme situations. His psychology studies no doubt play a part. In his first work *What the Body Does Not Remember*, the dancers threw bricks to each other to give a palpable sense of danger. In nearly all his works, the majority of which created for his Ultima Vez company, tension reigns on stage, and it easily turns into conflict, be that romantic, social or political.

His latest new piece is also part of this dynamic. During the first lockdown, and now using it as his inspiration, Wim created *Draw from Within* with Rambert, a piece streamed online. To ensure that the broadcasts were seen live in Europe as well as in Asia and America during the autumn of 2020, it was danced at different times of day, on each occasion recorded by 5 cameras.

*Draw from Within* has now been reworked

to face the front and has become a performance for live audiences in the theatre. It has been redesigned for the stage while still retaining some of its cinematographic elements (another of Vandekeybus' passions). In addition to some of the Flemish choreographer's obsessions such as cruelty, innocence and unrest, above all we find here his nervy choreography, his super-charged gestural movement style translated by springy leaps, frantic rushing, falls and rolls followed immediately by passionate duets. In its exuberance and improbable narrative, there are also traces of Belgian surrealism as exemplified by such poets as Louis Scutenaire and Achille Chavée.

This astonishingly vibrant choreography obviously requires young acrobatic and virtuosic bodies who are unafraid to risk disaster. The 17 dancers of the historic English ensemble now simply called Rambert, rejuvenated since current director Benoît Swan Pouffer brought in young dancers from Rambert2 (its junior company), were perfectly suited to interpret Vandekeybus madness.

The music comprises several pieces from the 1960s, which the choreographer, during long evenings after rehearsals in London and in full lockdown, had the time to listen to and put together in a contrasting playlist.

**Sonia Schoonejans**

manner of true connoisseurs, the atmosphere changes. Then it is time for the infernal 'truth', an extended dance, full of energy, a jubilant saraband of great virtuosity, deliberately excessive both in intensity and duration, like those who have literally been possessed by the Devil. Castello's fascination with the tradition of African movement, tackled in his previous *Mbira*, here brims over in breath-taking rhythmic mastery; the sounds are techno, jazz and folk.

The video setting offers some hilarious surprises, such as the white statue of a bodybuilder in sunglasses who, initially on all fours, suddenly gets up and walks a funny walk.

Without let-up, we come to the end like in a cabaret, revue or burlesque show. Glitter for everyone, including the boys.

In the spirit of protest, Roberto Castello, who possesses talent, culture and intelligence, does not concern himself with balancing the pace and weighting of the various parts of his narrative, rather, he demonstrates his intense good taste, his lifelong passions and torments, like a descendant of Buñuel's unforgettable film *Le Charme discret de la bourgeoisie*. Otherwise, his *Inferno* would have been too perfect which would be best avoided for a mocking and provocatively sarcastic author like him.

**Elisa Guzzo Vaccarino**

*Simone Damberg Würtz, Liam Francis – Rambert company: "Draw from Within", c. Wim Vandekeybus (ph. C. Greenwell)*

