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Dublin Dance Festival 2016 the physical and political protest of 'Planites'

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Planites by Patricia Apergi and Aerites Dance Company
Andreas Endermann

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Rating: ★★★★★

Five male dancers sit on stage with a kind of brooding, exhausted, pensiveness. Presently a diagonal line is formed as their resting places break apart and the mat is pulled from under them. There's a constant interplay of movement along this astronomical alignment, fluid sequences moving forward and backward, as these willing and reluctant migrants become wandering stars, restless nomads negotiating a modern urban landscape, a place both hilarious and terrifying. Exquisite at moments, relentlessly physical throughout, the Irish premiere of "Planites" by Greek choreographer Patricia Apergi and Aerites Dance Company, explores the migrant collective experience in a genuinely engaging and thought provoking work. But one which appears to speak exclusively to the male migrant experience, and one whose potency sometimes falls victim to its own innate charm.

Serving as the opening performance to The Dublin Dance Festival's 2016 main programme, after the excellent "Embodied at The GPO" launched the festival back in April, "Planites" offers something of a cultural melting pot. Choreographically marrying influences from Flamenco, Irish Step dance, hip hop and street protest, along with a heightened sense of theatricality, "Planites" expressiveness seems derived as much from facial expressions and sounds as from movement. Indeed, its strong vocal text built on breathes, groans, sighs, chants, and possibly some Greek, layers "Planites" with another level of interpretative richness.

Choreographically, "Planites" appears to move in broad, choreographic strokes through which an almost organic sense of movement seems to occur. Even during brief solos or groupings, the sense of the collective and the communal dominates, with performers Ilias Chatzigeorgiou, Nontas Damopoulos, Andreas Labner, Giorgos Deligiannis Sioras, Dimokritos Sifakis seeming to work as a single organism. Throughout, "Planites" male tribe of five expand, contract, realign and redefine themselves through a wonderfully fluid interplay of movements. Yet a sort of signature patterning sets in in places, one not as rich or diverse as it might have been given "Planites" many influences. Humour also dominates at key moments, sapping its cartoon violence of much of its impact. The excellent musical composition by Vasilis Mantzoukis, which accompanied certain sequences, suggested a level of power that the movements didn't always live up to. But when the synergy was struck it could be breathtaking, with huge plaudits going to Nikos Vlasopolous for a wonderfully evocative lighting design.

If "Planites" isn't quite as thrilling as it might have been, it's perhaps because it doesn't take itself too seriously, and the pay off is a wonderful sense of charm and warmth in places. It's also significant that since it first took to the stage back in 2013, the stories of migrants, particularly those entering Greece, resonate differently now. But "Planites" still retains its power to protest, eschewing any easy happy ever after, suggesting rather a painful letting go of lives and moments, scattered like debris, or like driftwood upon a beach. At its best, "Planites" is a poignant, powerful, political work, steeped in both heart and humour.

"Planites" by Patricia Apergi/Aerites Dance Company runs as part of the Dublin Dance Festival 2016 at The Samuel Beckett Theatre until May 19th

Doors open 7.30 p.m.

Tickets: €25.00 or €20.00 concession

Post show talk with Dylan Tighe Wednesday May 18th

For further information, visit Dublin Dance Festival <http://www.dublindancefestival.ie/>

Chris O'Rourke
Theatre Examiner



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