

Modern Dance Reviews  
Impressum

**Julie Nioche: les sisyphes x 10**

Lisbon, June 2006

This short performance of the Close Encounter series took place at the Hospital Miguel Bombarda in Lisbon seven times on one day. The performer wears trainers and jogging pants. She starts by warming up to classical rock and gets into an intense workout, which is all her part is about: fast, mechanical running and jumping on the spot in a feverish tempo. You are looking for aesthetics or structure until you grasp that there is none: physical exercise until exhaustion is the central idea of the performance.

After a couple of minutes, a male performer in a green T-shirt steps in. He moves around, circles around the sportswoman and imitates her movement. Then an older man in shabby trousers and sandals appears. A band-aid is dangling out of his trousers and he looks like a confused patient (the whole event takes place in a hospital). The man in a green T-shirt unsuccessfully tries to push the intruder out, then he continues running in circles with exalted gestures of anger and desperation.

A fourth man joins the three and the performers occasionally engage in brief interactions with dissent and confrontation. During all this, the "real" performer increases the speed of her workout so that you start to worry about her health.

In the program guide to the Alkantara festival, you find the following hints: "Not being professional or regular dancers, the participants explore the state of physical exhaustion. This experience invites them to go beyond their limits."

Julie Nioche also mentions the feeling of rage she experienced in her adolescence. This is difficult to understand unless you know that her performance in Lisbon was a modification of her earlier idea, in which she brought teenagers onto the stage to drive them into a futile, exhausting exercise to help them share "inexpressible intimate demands". Purposeless running and jumping, colored by anger, might appear strange as the foundation of a performance. However, strange and unusual is related to novel, which is an eminent virtue and goal of most performers.



Photos: Petr Karlovsky