

AUTO

Wampach slightly mad, Cathala implacable Two memorable new works at the Festival Uzès Danse

Radical and efficient, David Wampach and H el ene Cathala have now established themselves in the upscale choreographic landscape of the Festival. He presented *Auto*, which premiered at the Rencontres chor graphiques de Seine Saint-Denis, performing – body and soul – in drag.

Journeys form an essential part of the youth of aesthetics. For several months, several French choreographers, back from working in Lisbon, could not stop talking about a place called *Finalmente*, a small drag cabaret in the Portuguese capital which presents an amateur night every Monday. We should believe our artist/ travelers – this particular event is unique on the European continent. *Auto*, the latest piece by David Wampach, immortalises it, as if the artist had been planning a different project, but then let the discovery of *Finalmente* change his ideas, contaminating them somewhat, producing an unclassifiable piece, unpredictable, definitely out of the box. Deliciously whacked.

Out of the “genre”? Well, it’s certainly trans-genre, at the very least.

Wampach performs the entire work in drag, wearing a dress, a wig and high heels, physical, detached, as if elsewhere, somewhere no one is expecting him. He is slightly reserved, vague, but present. Not perfect – in fact, how many “perfect” drag artists do we know? That is not their talent, drag performers illuminate in a different way, fiddling, arranging, touching things that are intimate, close, constituent, masculine and feminine.

In the gap between effects and means, the drag element fascinates. Wampach totters a little, his movements extreme, he pierces straight to the heart of the problems and passions of this kind of metamorphosis and performance. The *Auto* flyer distributed at the Festival of Uz es had this printed on it, sixty nine times: *desillusionsdesillusions* – a French pun meaning both *disillusion* and *illusions*.

Auto is also performed by a musician, Aur elien Richard, on an upright piano he plays while rolling it all over the stage. Next to a dancer who is sometimes limited in his movements by the very height of his heels, the music is strongly imbued with the choreography. In addition, the metallic, flamboyant, powerful chords continue to play even when the musician steps away from the piano, so what is *live* and what is recorded? Is there a score? Is one sound more “true” than another? It keeps changing.

Something else happens during the piece, videos are projected. And where is Wampach? Onscreen with the images, offscreen as the director. And also standing there live in front of the screen, interpreting his own characters, in a hyperbolic burst of energy, constantly moving. Perhaps these films are a record of the *Finalmente* shows, or perhaps an exaggerated tracing/ channeling of *Carrie*, by

Brian de Palma or John Waters' *Desperate Living*.

Fearless, touching, funny, slightly crazed, David Wampach manages to manipulate the concept in order to free himself from it, avoiding all semblance of pontification. The work ends with a pastiche of a "Woman Sawed in Half" number, a body in pieces, a failed trick – *Auto* gives off a joyous freedom ...

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July 1, 2008