

L'autre visage de la gigue

The other side of stepdancing

« We see contemporary stepdancing as a game », explains Lük Fleury.

STEPHANIE BRODY special collaboration

« STEP DANCING, is like wild lace. It's both refined and crude », explains Lük Fleury, one of Montreal's contemporary stepdancing pioneers. Along the road, as the song goes, Fleury meets a graduate of UQAM's dance department Marie-Soleil Pilette, who shares his wish to see stepdancing evolve after being put away in the attic alongside granny's lace for too long. Both share the limelight at Tangente in an evening presentation devoted to the renewal of stepdancing.

« Stepdancing is amazing! exclaims Fleury. There's been enough post-neo-minimalist and other such work. We see contemporary stepdancing as a game. » Here, you will not find elaborate existential theories on the art of choreography. Just some ants in the pants, restless bodies and a boiling desire to explore new avenues.

During the interview both are overflowing with child-like enthusiasm. Lük gets up to show how he loosens the dancer's upper body, traditionally rigid and straight, by adding both arms, something he has explored since *Mémoire vive*, presented at Tangente in 1999. And suddenly, without notice, he begins hammering the floor, this time to explain the workings of the « stepdancing machine », one of his inventions. Parsimoniously incorporated into his newest piece *Machines*, this structure allows him to have even more fun with rhythms and sounds by having the dancers climb stairs and landings (if he had money, the machine would be gigantic, including trampolines and slides).

Marie-Soleil doesn't stop giggling while hearing Lük's stories. « What he does is really off the wall! » The smiling young woman who incarnates her name marvellously well, doesn't stay put much more than her colleague. After pushing away the tables and chairs of the café, she voluntarily demonstrates a somersault to the rhythm of the waltz-clog. This traditional rhythm serves as a basis for her piece *Zone Gigue*, in which she executes the rhythm with the feet, with the body in a vertical position but also just barely off the floor horizontally. « I make games out of rhythm, space and canons, I shift the accents and perspective, all the while rigorously respecting the counts of the waltz-clog. The rhythm gets passed from one dancer to another creating a hypnotic effect. »

Lük and Marie-Soleil certainly owe their craving for experimentation to their widely varied backgrounds. Lük has been a member of *Les Éclusiers de Lachine* a folk dance troupe for about 20 years and at times a playwright. Founder of *Théâtre Kafala*, he has written and directed plays such as *Le Chœur des silences* (nominated for Revelation of the year at the gala des Masques in 1998), in which the actors interact both with their words and with the tapping of their feet.

Marie-Soleil has also worked with a number of folk dance troupes such as *l'Ensemble Mackinaw* of Drummondville, since childhood. But she quickly felt a need to push the envelope beyond the more restricted frame of « traditional » troupes. She began to stepdance with Pierre Chartrand and eventually began dancing in his performance trio *Rapetipetam*. At the same time she was pursuing her bachelor's in dance, but her interest in mixing contemporary dance and stepdancing came later on.

« It only occurred to me towards the end of my schooling, right before presenting my final project. I watched as *Zeugma*, a collective with which I collaborated, worked with gumboots (a percussive south-african dance) and pushed it beyond its traditional rhythms. That inspired me. I came to the conclusion that I too could use tradition, which ultimately is what resembles me the most. »

In addition to their respective works, Lük and Marie-Soleil will present *Rain*, their first collaboration danced to the airy music of *Moby* including rain and wind noises. « I wanted to prove that stepdancing can be soft, explains Lük. Stepdancing isn't only a dance for parties, it can also be soft »

ZONE GIGUE by Marie-Soleil Pilette and *MACHINES* by Lük Fleury, at *l'Espace Tangente*, from the 23rd to the 26th of January Info: 514 525-1500.

Translated from french by Olena H