

“Requiem voor wie gebleven is,” Gilles Michiels, De Standaard, 01.07.2021. Translated to English by Patrick Lennon

MUSIC THEATRE

Requiem for those who stayed ***

‘Ramble Song’ stands out in Berlin’s oeuvre: not a documentary performance, but a film concert that turns the gaze inward.

A girl sits on a runway with a balloon. Three girls play the trumpet on a deserted beach. A woman counts scars in front of the mirror. A man lies down in a coffin. A man digs a house of air in a lawn and places a letterbox next to it.

These are scenes of stillness that you see in this atypical Berlin performance. Whereas the makers Bart Baele and Yves Degryse usually blend film and performance in a documentary approach, you have to puzzle out this story yourself. ‘Ramble Song’ is an associative journey across often subdued slices of life, which in this circular installation are shown on a 360° screen.

At the centre of the installation, surrounded by the audience, are four musicians: besides Berlin-composer Peter Van Laerhoven, Eric Thielemans (drums), Tim Coenen (guitar) and Tine Hubrechts (cello). Their music – between soundscape, Krautrock and contemporary classical – is the constant in this performance, but it does not claim full attention either. For that, the performance remains very instrumental.

Introspection

So where does the weight of this performance lie? Fragments of text appear on the screen above the music, like a voiceless parlendo. They are dreamy thoughts, about coming into the world and the courage to stay there, about which road to take when all the contradictory extremes – hope and despair, euphoria and crisis – exist side by side.

‘Ramble Song’ possibly chooses the most difficult road: the middle one, that of ambiguity. In these images, transience becomes vital, exuberance becomes serene, absurdity seems self-evident. If at first this series of idiosyncratic scenes seems to add up with difficulty, you

understand afterwards that they invite introspection rather than interpretation – as if this time, the makers were giving you the keys to document your inner world.

With themes such as death and loneliness and with the intimate audience setting, it is impossible to imagine this performance outside of the corona context, but the tone remains meandering and poetic. This work, both mourning ritual and *acte de présence*, is to be felt rather than read. And that is courageous.

The album 'Ramble Song' is available on record and on Spotify.