

DE MEEKERS: LIGHT-FOOTED AND PLAYFUL

What can you say about a dance performance for kids in which Little Red Riding Hood pricks a forest full of wolves in their fat bellies? An explosive effect with guaranteed success if the belly is a balloon stuffed under the dancer's costume. And there's plenty of amusing dance here, mostly in a form in which a teasing send-up of classical foot positions, arm movements and atmosphere can be noticed. Nothing about this performance is really run-of-the-mill.

The floor and the backdrop are virgin white in "A Faulty Fairytale", as are most of the costumes. Everyone can fill in his own colors in this fairytale phantasy. And that's easily done, since there are traces of practically every well-known fairytale to be discovered here, including Hansel and Gretel, wandering on their path through the woods. When one of the boys tears a letter and leaves a trail of scraps, they are collected by a curious girl. Reading these bizarre fragments of broken fairytales doesn't make her or the youthful audience much wiser, but this performance is about tickling the imagination, and not about knowledge.

Thus, the three women start to argue jealously over the first handsome prince who appears on stage, until they notice that there are three princes running around in this Faulty Fairytale. One of the princes appeals to the audience for help. Is there perhaps a "genuine princess" here who could kiss his brother-a frog- so that he can get his princely form back? In the meantime, the three princes rap to each other in a way suspiciously resembles croaking. The double roles that they often play endow them with a wry comic quality. And the women, who would like to indulge themselves as coquette little princesses, sometimes lose their heads as well as the count.

A pervading irony continually echoes through the various text fragments. And along with that, the players are good at improvising. A good example is Sassan Saghari Yaghmai, who was substituting an injured dancer in the performance I saw, and did not yet play each scene according to the book. At one moment he plays an Arabian prince in Snow White: "Achmed" you should learn your text, whispers the magic mirror on the wall, as he stands there confusedly trying to remember "Who's the fairest of them all?" As far as charming children goes, this Iranian dancer does not need to learn anything more.

In only one of the many scenes was there a moment that came across as slightly intellectual, or unclear, and the effect was immediately noticeable - "what are they doing now?" - on the otherwise concentrated children. But, on the whole, this fairytale-fantasy is surprisingly light-footed and playful. The light-hearted dance scenes, whose broad lines are abstract and usually contain a humorous hint about a following scene, speak, through their atmosphere, to the imagination. While, in terms of dance technique some of the performers may not be perfect, they are certainly well-equipped for this entertaining task.

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