

THE (IM)POSSIBILITIES OF YOUTH-DANCE AS A GENRE

From "NOTES", the dutch-language dance monthly, December 1993:
(The article is a modified version of a lecture given by Eva van Schaik, dance critic, in the Theater Instituut Nederland on October 18, 1993. After a review of her fruitless search for a contemporary dance performance that her children and their generation seemed to find interesting, she finishes the original lecture with an appeal to the heavens: "Make dance fun again (not the same!) like it was for me back then..." She then closes her article with the following paragraphs):

PRAYERS ANSWERED

Postscript: Less than a week after I had said and written all this, it seems that my prayers were heard and finally answered with a performance that is not (made) especially for children, but (rather) for all age groups. And that's the way it should be, too, since a product that's good for children is also good for adults. In "A FAULTY FAIRYTALE" by Arthur Rosenfeld and Ana Teixidó all the "educational" pitfalls are skillfully avoided. (Their dance group) De Meekers proves that it is possible, through simple means, to make a direct and above all intelligent and witty appeal to both children and adults. Although children and adults will understand some elements in different ways, a variety of traditional fairytale-figures are used to speak to everyone equally well.

Arthur Rosenfeld took inspiration for this performance from Roald Dahl's rhymes based on fairytales by Mother Goose and the Brothers Grimm. And, although there proved to be little demand for these exceptionally cynical and tart rhymes (as opposed to Dahl's earlier work), Rosenfeld and his six dancers have managed to give them a softening "human touch". What Dahl couldn't do on paper has succeeded on the white stage with the one black crow and the little window in the white backdrop: six characters, easily recognizable for both young and old, with their own human faults, who give life to the all-powerful fairytale figures while simultaneously tripping them up.

As if made to order, the audience also got to see a parody of most of the current dance offerings for children: in the scene where three sharp-tongued girls ask themselves whether the three leotardish modern-dance frog-princes are having heart attacks, or whether they've merely caught a cold.

Thoroughly brilliant is the short scene with the twinkling synthesizer on wheels and the enormous red balloon. In short, a performance close to my heart that I can take my children to.

The party finished with an unforgettable picture. A little girl danced unselfconsciously around the corridors of the Korzo Theater, seemingly hooked on being a Cinderella who traps princes and gives them asthma. Stars and pussy-cats will live forever (in the imagination of children).