

## **A FAULTY FAIRYTALE**

"Rup, rup" croak three handsome young men in gold-beige jackets and white tights. Princes as enchanted frogs, wasn't that the way it was? Two princes save Snow-White, then choke on an apple themselves. There's something fishy going on here. Somebody's been fooling around in the old fairytale book.

The Rotterdam choreographer Arthur Rosenfeld is apparently to blame. He and his partner, Ana Teixidó, have taken inspiration for their first dance performance for children from age-old fairytales. It seems that both young and old can still lose their hearts in such tales, even if the stories are a bit "defective".

Little pieces of paper whirl around the stage. One of the six dancers of The Meekers snaps them up. It's impossible to make heads or tails from the message she reads from them, but it is fun. And beyond that, it is the beginning of a comical dance collage of more or less recognizable stories of princes and princesses, Hansels and Gretels. The journey through Wonderland is accompanied by familiar music and given form in visually pleasing dance. Rosenfeld has made use of all the old tricks, even the little manipulative dances in which shoulders are nudged and rear-ends shaken, a standard part of dance for kids. And a lot of brightly colored objects are introduced and moved around the stage.

What a bore!, you might say, remembering all those other "educational" dance performances you may have seen in the past. Wrong! Not this time. While some of Rosenfeld's earlier "adult" performances sometimes seemed to lack rhythm, the faulty fairytales are tightly directed and ingeniously woven together. One power-packed moment is the "charades" scene, (the game is familiar from TV to both young and old), spontaneously initiated by one of the princesses who wants to draw her cackling girlfriends' attention to Cinderella. The kids in the audience guessed the answer long before the dancers did, and you can be sure it was supposed to be that way.

Sometimes the timing is so sharp that you get the feeling that things pass by much too quickly. Thus, the joker's teasing game with the giant red ball could have gone on longer. And "Mirror, mirror on the wall"-- a long strip of aluminium foil from behind which a boy cuts down a sweet girl with "Ugh! Are you ugly!!"-- only wet my appetite for much more.

Rosenfeld's humor and satire draw a spontaneous laugh from you. The familiarity of the music (charleston, blues, disco) and the repetition of movement themes (kiss/faint-dance) contribute to the right emotional charge, so long as the characters remain believable and natural in their reactions. The Meekers do an excellent job on that score, in that they themselves manage to become children again for the duration of the performance. You can simply feel how much pleasure they have diving into this jumbled fantasy world. Andreas Denk is a mellow prince with heroic friends; Hildegard Draaier a shrieking witch with enamoured girl-friends. They abuse each other and still dance together; make the girls afraid but are afraid themselves; lose themselves in their own dreams and then cry all together when the dream is over. And, as a consolation that it all has to end, a lovely final dance to a famous musical number in a shower of confetti.

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