

*We Summer, at Museion*

From *Alto Adige, February XX, 2009*

Sandra Matuella

Museion presents *We Summer* in the midst of a frigid winter, and the performance will indeed be remembered as a summertime splash of energy and color, couched in a choreography of hot contemporary tones, authored by Veronika Riz. (The last performance takes place tonight, at 8:30 p. m.) It is a radical work with a rigorous line of choreography that enunciates a contemporary sense of gesture while finding its basis in a mode of bodily expression which is no less strong than free, and entirely unencumbered by theatrical mannerisms or any conventional styles of dance. Veronika Riz establishes her point of departure in an abstract "Rococo" atmosphere as suggested by the details of the dancers' costumes, no less than by the accents and rhythms of a minuet and a chaconne, and she finally evokes, in the white cube of Museion's fourth floor, a dimension of *Überzeit*, or of an absolute, metaphysical time that nonetheless bears traces of existential stories of social and sexual identity, of death, and of intra- and interpersonal conflict.

The five dancers who perform this work are from five different countries—Austria, Denmark, Italy, Poland and Romania—but they share a training that derives from the German dance theater of Pina Bausch and Sasha Waltz, and as well from progressive English dance. The spontaneity of their movements is no more than apparent, and is in fact the fruit of rigorous bodily control, especially in those moments when they intensely interact with the objects in their environment (a table, chairs, a night table, a bed and a screen) and thus project it into a state of constant metamorphosis. Their contribution to the performance is also to be seen as creative in a larger sense, in the light of their direct participation in the construction of a richly gestural score in which each of the performers emphasizes and gives poetic meaning to his or her underlying attitudes. Veronika Ritz has structured and recomposed the choreographical stimuli offered by her dancers, aligning them precisely as pictorial and sculptural figures which in

turn are always governed by a sense of drama and movement that perfectly harmonizes with the light designs of the art installation (inclusive of an atmospheric video) created by Mario Airò.

Rhythm is another of the fundamental components of this work, which makes no use of melodic music or recorded sound effects: the rhythm inherent in the choreography blends with the rhythmic landscape created by the South Tyrolean percussionist Elisabeth Runger, who throughout the performance is kneeling on the ground while using two drum sticks to strike various sheets of metal, tubes and other pieces of scrap iron, in the midst of an array of bells, gongs and cymbals. Elisabeth Runger should in fact be a subject of discussion in her very own right. Born and raised in the town of Terlano, she studied classical percussion in Vienna, and has lived in Luxembourg for the past twenty-five years. She is capable of transforming "scrap iron" into a symphony of rhythms and sounds: *We Summer* is also to be credited with offering this extraordinary percussionist her first performance venue in our region.

All in all, *We Summer* is a work in which the new languages of dance, theater, video, and music dialogue as equals with one another, and it finds its ideal setting not so much in the traditional spaces of theater as in museums committed to research, or in those festivals where art is deployed as a tool for the investigation of the complexity of the modern world: festivals such as the Venice Biennale, "Oriente Occidente" in Rovereto, "Tanz im August" in Berlin, "Impuls Tanz in" Vienna, or "Dance Umbrella" in London.