

## **Queens Of The Fauns - reviews**

### **Review SVD / Anna Ångström / 01-02-2019**

#### **Equal club-fauns in a sensual fog**

Two fauns at the techno club - when French choreographer Frédéric Gies goes into dialogue with Nijinsky's scandalous works from 1912, it becomes a mix of styles ending in a sensual meeting.

Shocking raw and animalistic, with shameless gestures - or one perfect personification of the Greek ancient beauty ideal. Yes, the sentences certainly went apart when Russian ballet star Vaslav Nijinsky made his choreographic debut with "The afternoon of a faun" in Paris 1912. Over one hundred years later, two equal fauns emerge from the smoke in Weld's cellar. Debussy's music is now pumping techno beats produced by Fiedel who gets the whole room to vibrate. The fluorescent lamps flash in a stylized nature where the two very much human demigods, dressed in beige latex, are half-lying and mirroring each other extremely pleasantly and slowly with their arms over their bodies. So soft against the hard music.

When you no longer have to break into established traditions - like Nijinsky did with the classical ballet - you can instead return to them, call history against the present. Just as it often happens at Weld. In "Queens of the Fauns" it is as if the choreographer Frédéric Gies and his partner Elizabeth Ward inject life in a myth from the history of art and dance, and place it in a club environment to examine the understanding of the body, sexuality, contact and trance.

Yes, Nijinsky's faun even becomes a drag-number when a chunk of voguing breaks into a mix of styles, old and new, both schooled and free. The dancers move synchronously but in parallel, increasing the pace and playing with Nijinsky's two-dimensional choreography but also with the grace of ballet and with coarse free dance in simple, repetitive sequences. They seem to have one agreement, an exchange on equal terms. At the end, these independent but synchronized bodies unite in a dense, tender dance. Sensual.

There is something liberating, permissive and at the same time suggestive in the dance of these faun-queens. Form is not a restriction but a possibility. A beautiful statement.

### **Review Dagens Nyheter / Josefine Wikström / 20-01-2019**

#### **Desire and techno in "Queens of the fauns"**

In 1912, Vaslav Nijinsky shocked the Parisian bourgeoisie with his scandalous "The afternoon of a Faun", choreographed for the Russian Ballet. Thanks to its way of

breaking the ballet conventions through the depiction of a faun's (half-human, half-animal) sexual conquests, it is usually considered the first modern dance.

In the French choreographer and dancer Frédéric Gies "Queens of the fauns", it is instead two faunas. And instead of Nijinsky's animal costume, Gies and Elizabeth Ward wear body-like transparent latex suits.

Claude Debussy's music is exchanged for experimental techno, but as with Nijinsky, it does not guide the dance. Initially, they are half-lying, as in the original, supported on one forearm. As expected of the desire.

Then follows a complex composed sequence of material taken from Nijinsky's choreography, angular and often two-dimensional. Mixed with elements of classic ballet and techno dance. There is a desire, but no nymphs to conquer.

Instead, the dance establishes a place where pleasure and desire go in more than one direction. Sometimes one starts with a movement and the other follows, then stops, changes direction and then comes into unison again. The whole time commuting between the two walls. Towards the end this is broken. They come closer together and dance like one body, with eyes closed.

If in contemporary dance, since at least twenty years ago, there has been an explicit desire to deal with the dancing body's different layers of meaning, the strength of "Queens of the fauns" is that it shows how, not just bodies and their appearance, but also choreography itself, can break with and create new structures of desires.

"Queens of the fauns" is not a modernized version of Nijinsky's masterpiece, but utilizes it as historical material, to investigate what is physically possible today when the question of sexual conquest, more than a hundred years later, looks very different from the time of Nijinsky.

### **Review Expressen / Hanna Johansson / 19-01-2019**

#### **Pronounced erotic charge when the forest becomes a club**

The premiere of the ballet "The afternoon of a faun" 1912 was, as usual when Nijinsky is involved, a scandal. In Le Figaro, the performance was criticized for its "bestial eroticism" and for the dancers' "raw" and "indecent" movements - which, when one reads it today, sounds like an excellent review. In this piece, Nijinsky left the ballet's traditions and danced barefoot, in profile as to resemble a bas-relief, permeated by a strong sexual charge.

When choreographer Frédéric Gies takes on this iconic ballet, Debussy's music is replaced by techno by the Berghain-dj Fiedel. The mythological forest becomes a club, an environment that can be so fabulous. The erotic subtext of the original work is central and pronounced, reflected in Gies and dance partner Elizabeth Ward's costumes: deconstructed latex suits that expose stomachs, butts and breast.

- Pulsating music-

From the beginning till the end, it is a show that activates all the senses. The music that pulsates in the body, the smell of the smoke machine that spreads among the audience and who is embedding Gies and Ward in a dreamy fog. The duo dances with minimalist movements and mirrors each other as if they were the same person.

Then the intensity is turned up. Gies and Ward move across the stage in a way that clearly refers to Nijinsky's ballet. But the dynamics of "The afternoon of a faun", where one is a hunter and another is the prey, here, is rather a negotiation. There is tenderness and intimacy between the dancers, which sometimes makes it feel as if we were peeping, as if becoming the witness to a real meeting.

- Sweaty bodies-

The club environment, the techno, the smoke, the animality of a pair of sweaty bodies, is often coded as hard. But "Queens of the fauns" is soft. Gies catches something of the night world nonverbal communication: the small signs, the contact between two people who meet for the first time in a sea of others and who creates their own small world there. When the lights are up after the end of the performance, it feels as if we all, for a short while, were part of that world.

### **Review Aftonbladet / Cecilia Djurberg / 01-02-2019**

#### **An equal techno interpretation of "The afternoon of a faun"**

Despite the fact that norm-criticism has become the norm in the performing arts, there are still challenges when it comes to gender roles and sexuality on stage. Bodies are easily interpreted stereotypically from superficial sexual codes, albeit accidentally, unknowingly or reluctantly. Because dance is an ancient symbol for sex and love one can read heteronormative love relationships in duets between male and female dancers.

In obvious amorous duets, absolute equality is unusual. Possibilities for balancing power and strength are dynamically rewarding choreographically. A mirrored role-play is more common than a complete erasure of differences, and sexuality is often portrayed in terms of rewarding and taking.

Vaslav Nijinsky's "The afternoon of a faun" was groundbreaking at the premiere in 1912, but was just such a sexually loaded depiction of a hunter and a prey. When the dancers Frédéric Gies and Elizabeth Ward enter into dialogue with this dance history milestone they succeed in achieving something as unusual as perfect equality. In their "Queens of the fauns", which is shown at Weld in Stockholm until Sunday Feb 3 and at Inkonst in Malmö March 2, the faun and nymph wake up in a smoky rave glade and execute mating synchronized and balanced dances in flabby, semi-transparent latex costumes and harness to the live techno set by the dj Fiedel.

References to Debussy's dreamy step-flute loop in the original music and reminiscences from the Russian ballet's modernist steps and famous profile poses are remixed interestingly in an innovative dance piece about sensual consent.