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Ressort: Kunst, Kultur und Musik

Nocturne (Parade)

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Phia Ménard's nocturne (Parade) is a devastatingly beautiful work that approaches contemporary catastrophe through the language of wonder. At first encounter, the piece feels like a children's game: weightless plastic figures spin and tremble in artificial wind, composing an ever-changing choreography of floating, collapsing and re-forming. Yet Ménard is one of the most singular voices in European performance.

Ménard uses this apparent play not as escapism, but as a way to let horror come into view without blunt representation. The result is a modern danse macabre in which fragility and terror are inseparable. The dramaturgy is anchored by the spectral presence of Goethe's Erlkönig and Schubert's iconic setting, invoked as a frame for seduction and threat. The whispering promise—"lovely games I'll play with you"—becomes chillingly literal here: we are drawn into the delight of watching these translucent bodies dance, only to realise that their swirling is haunted by images of war, displacement and looming destruction. Ménard's mastery lies in the precision of her stagecraft.

The choreography of materials—plastic bags, gusts of air, light, and sound—operates with the rigour of a score, yet it maintains the spontaneity of weather. The wind is both choreographer and executioner. Crucially, nocturne (Parade) is also an intimate act of mourning and remembering. The dedication to Ménard's father, whose conscription in the Algerian war turned him into a lifelong pacifist, threads the work with a quiet ethical insistence. Ménard positions herself at once as the storyteller-parent and as the vulnerable child, oscillating between guiding and being carried away by forces larger than herself.

This double perspective allows the piece to speak with rare clarity to both adults and children: it never underestimates the latter's ability to sense danger, nor the former's tendency to deny it. As an artwork, nocturne (Parade) is a tour de force of material choreography and poetic politics. It reminds us that the lightest substances can bear the heaviest meanings, and that in the whirling of plastic in a stage wind, the ghosts of past and present wars may be closer than we wish to admit.

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