

## Why Not? Magazine- The Critical Piece



*The Critical Piece* of Jochen Stechmann cannot be called minimal at all, it is direct and in your face. Especially if you write about dance, like me, you cannot escape. In describing and analyzing dance criticism he gives some interesting insights about what dance is. It is this kind of institutional critique that revisits work of artists of the Judson Dance Theater in New York in the 1960's. By doing so Stechmann bravely reflects on dance and its discourse.

In a quasi scientific manner *The Critical Piece* deals with the subject of dance criticism structuring it clearly in four chapters of description, analysis, judgement and conclusion. According to his analytical 'research' readers want to hear more about the reactions of the audience. Luckily Stechmann avoids to turn into preacher by adding a welcome irony to the topic. The dancers try to reenact movements based upon the content of the reviews. Turning into improvisation theatre Stechmann succeeds in making fun of the abstract content, being the problem of so many reviews. The two dancers Andrea Beugger and Mariangela Tinelli pick up the irony smooth and easy and know how to make the audience laugh.

Irony and criticism dominate the first part of the piece. However, reaching judgement and heading for conclusion an underlying tendency of frustration comes to the fore and that's what worries me as dance critic. Boldly Stechmann deconstructs dance criticism and tears it apart. By not offering an alternative, the light irony of the beginning turns into black cynicism. Should we then stop writing and finish the yet so skinny discourse on dance? Wrapping up with a live guitar solo of Stechmann himself offers bitter solace.

Elien van Riet