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Choreographer Wim Vandekeybus on his new production, 'Speak Low If You Speak Love'

Wim Vandekeybus' performance company has existed for twenty-nine years. So next year is its pearl anniversary. This summer, Vandekeybus will be going back to the roots of a story that has never ceased expanding. Regarding *What the Body Does Not Remember*, the piece that started it all in 1987, he says: 'essentially it revolves around love, the physical form'.

'Now, thirty years later, we are doing the same thing in *Speak Low If You Speak Love*, but we are going for the emotional side, the passion, the feeling, the mystery, but also the sordid side. What the French philosopher Jean Baudrillard called *la seduction*.' The title of the piece originates in Shakespeare and was later taken up by the composer Kurt Weill and sung by such jazz legends as Billie Holiday and Ella Fitzgerald. In this new production, it is not Ultima Vez' intention to provide an all-embracing framework by which to understand love. As Vandekeybus says: 'No, because the comprehensibility of love does not exist as such, it is weightless. Man gives it meaning and imputes to it a certain connotation. What we are concerned with is the recognition and the emotionality.'

Flash

Vandekeybus experiences the present commercial approach to love as one-dimensional, as a flash. 'It has been stripped of all its authenticity and has become too sugary, too demanding. Excite me, excite me, in sexual ways too. We are going beyond the broader meaning of the word. The ancient Greeks had six different words for six different forms of love. We no longer have that. Unfortunately. So *Speak Low* is trying to take a broader look, which gives it some of the features of a Greek tragedy.' After *Talk to the Demon*, the previous production, where the performance was reinforced by long passages of text, *Speak Low* goes for music to intensify the feelings. 'It's marvellous simply to be able to ask the South-African singer Tutu Puoane and the Flemish rock 'n roll hero Mauro Pawlowski to 'sing a song'. Mauro has written a number for the female voice, and thereby succeeds, with a light musical touch, is setting the piece in motion; it's really fantastic. Love can hardly be captured in words, but music is able to arouse a certain feeling, and is after all able to convey the incredible power of love. As a performing artist, there's no harm in tackling such a universal theme every few years. Love is a hidden force; it's in every nook and cranny, it's everywhere, but you can't simply disregard it. That's why it's 'Speak Low'.'