

Bibi Ha Bibi

In a partition inspired by Inuit singing, Aloun Marchal and Henrique Furtado's play plunges us into two men's intimacy and questions manhood without seeming to.

By Lucie Combes

"Life is an enigmatic blow and what comes from it can only be an enigmatic blow". This sentence by the surrealist artist Jean Arp seems to be written for Bibi Ha Bibi where the first blows are directed into glasses filled with a blueish liquid through which the two performers communicate gurgling and raising their eyebrows in an accomplice form. It doesn't look like but they are actually warming up their voices, in their tight-fitting playsuits. The tone is set. In this bi-frontal setting laughter is authorized.

Intimacy language

As a starting point of this project: the meeting between two men and Inuit singing, a traditional throat singing of the Canadian Arctic which is usually played by two women, as a game. The two choreographers wished to pursue this voice and blow exploration on stage and thus brought their bodies face to face in a playful, rhythmical and vocal play where the modes of relation are reconfigured at each moment. Bibi Ha Bibi's subtlety is to bring into light the ineffable, the link that binds these two men and the connection they build up with the audience. Intimacy is not represented, it is given in acts.

Little by little Aloun Marchal and Henrique Furtado grunt into each other and then a real head-to-head performance initiates. Lead by the rhythm of their breaths that clears their throat and never fades, they slide from complicity to competition, from violence to tenderness, they suffocate, deform their face, vary the timbres, and let appear a singular language of movements and voice. A language that, while being specific to the dancers and in spite of its strangeness, proves to be the universal language of intimacy. To compose it, the two choreographers went through sports and ritual practices – as haka, and learnt techniques from wrestling and belly dancing.

The manhood game

As a sort of clownish partition, Bibi Ha Bibi takes an amused and unpretentious look at the intimacy between two men. Although the choreographers stress the fact they didn't want to address the masculinity issue, it happens to be difficult not to question this notion in front of a play inspired by a women game, where violence and power come after awkwardness manifestations, sweet gestures and friendly tenderness. They play with codes and so much the better. The title Bibi Ha Bibi has been chosen by chance amongst the play's rhythmical patterns but it finally proves to be a good catch, as it translates the experience very well: a communication game and variations around the affection expressed by the intimate address "Habibi", "honey" in Arabic.