

‘It’s nothing really’

‘Technician’ as performer, amplifiers as singers, cables as décor and choreography made out of ‘setting-up the technics’ were some of the original building blocks in Taavet Jansen’s piece ‘It’s nothing really’ (21-5-07, Amsterdam). ‘It’s nothing really’ was a performance created from the point of view of a ‘technician’ that introduced new perspectives of looking at technology, technical equipment as well as the notion of performer. This piece not only succeeded in transforming technical equipment into performers in a clever and humorous way, but also blurred the boundaries between ‘performer’ and ‘technician’. In sum, ‘It’s nothing really’ raised the question: ‘for whom the spotlight shines?’

In the piece, the spotlight was first of all shining on the ‘technician’s table’. In this way, the piece encouraged the audience to focus on the ‘movements’ of the ‘technician’, such as giving instructions to the computer, plugging cables and rolling up wires. In addition, Taavet showed how basic technical objects, such as cables could be used creatively as to create patterns and décor. Eventually, these movements created a choreography that differs from the starting point a ‘traditional dancer/performer’ would have taken in order to create a piece. Therefore, ‘It’s nothing really’ introduced new ‘input’ regarding choreography.

Secondly, the spotlights were shining on two amplifiers placed in the middle of the stage, through which a recorded song was heard. Normally, amplifiers are objects that facilitate to intensify the sounds of the performer and are placed either at the side or back of the stage. However, in Taavet’s piece, the two amplifiers were far beyond mere objects; the original manner of placing the amplifiers in the middle of the stage, under the spotlights gradually transformed the amplifiers into performers. In this way, the amplifiers gained a

certain 'presence' and 'gender' as one of the amplifiers projected a male voice and the other the voice of a female. Accordingly, what was seen on stage was a duet between a man amplifier and a woman amplifier singing about selling their body parts that requires twelve or thirteen days of delivery.

Finally, the spotlights were shining on Taavet standing before the audience. In his first solo, Taavet moved in darkness to be caught by the spotlight. The audience could not see him move, but caught sight of him again as the light went on, standing still. In his second solo, Taavet directly addressed the audience with his speech, which was interrupted by the random choices of the computer that turned the lights on and off. Both solo's were based on self-reflexivity in the sense that Taavet is trained as a technician and has experience behind the stage, but not on the stage. Nevertheless, by turning the lack of performing into an advantage and reflecting upon it in his performance in general, and 'solo's in specific, Taavet has shown that he is capable of being a strong performer -with a background in technics.

Hence, in contrast to the title, this piece deals with many current issues circulating in the field of dance and performance as a result of the increasing incorporation of technologies, which have also been raised during the Dance Unlimited Master program. Clearly, Taavet's piece reflects upon these questions.