

Bare bones physicality



NKTH
TEATTERI NAAMIO
JA HÖYHEN

The performance *Materia* by Teatteri Naamio ja Höyhen is “a physical theatre piece about the body as the primary locus of experience, the use of body and its representation.” Or so it is described in the program, but fear not – the study of corporeality touches basic themes and is very concrete in its physicality.

Director Akseli Aittomäki has performed in some butoh pieces by Ken Mai, and this shows in some respects also in this performance. The body is presented through its grotesque aspects, as matter to be used for different purposes, and not so much in aesthetics.

The beginning displays the body in the most abstract form: a forest of limbs is alienated from the everyday bodily reality.

The scenes depict different aspects of corporeality and “body-matter” physically. Sometimes it is realised in games, as with the scene by Juha Sääsäski and Jenni Kokkomäki. A man puts a woman into motion, which continues and evolves to its own culmination. It is some kind of contact-improvisation, except that contact is mostly avoided.

The performance is also, from time to time, hilarious, as with the orange eating contest that descends into gluttony. Is this the wretched body?

The catwalk has been so much used as material for dance, that it is a cliché in itself. In *Materia* it is extended far enough that it starts to work again. The scene is stretched and repeated in different variations so it gets close to Fellini-like absurdity!

Some further compressing might have helped the piece, as there are moments when the rhythm is lost. I thought painting the cracks in the wall was a representation of deterioration of matter, but still my thoughts started to wonder. Luckily, the rhythm was restored at the end.

- Jussi Tossavainen in *Helsingin Sanomat*