

Pere Faura

The work of Pere Faura (1980, Barcelona) is founded both on abstract scientific concepts and strongly autobiographical elements. He likes to wrong-foot the spectator and sees humour as an inevitable ingredient for his performances. The Spaniard Faura is very much in the picture since catching the public eye at his graduation from the SNDO (School for New Dance Development) in Amsterdam in 2006. As a youngster he was an enthusiastic participant in drama and musical performances. He still likes to use this basis to add an extra layer to his own choreographies. With him, popular culture effortlessly floats into and merges with a world of scientific abstraction. His piece *This is a Picture of a person I don't know* is an international hit. Faura works both individually and in the productions of others, including Nora Heilman and Ivana Müller.

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A search on Google suggests the name Pere Faura is inextricably linked with *This is a picture of a person I don't know* (2006), your graduation performance at the SNDO (School for New Dance Development) in Amsterdam. It won you the ITs Choreography Award and at the Dutch dance festival "Dansdagen" it was voted one of the most striking choreographies of 2006. Two years later you are touring festivals with a reprise of the piece. It is an intelligently constructed self-portrait with rousing fragments of musicals. How was this rough diamond born?

'What I tried to do in the performance was use all the techniques I had ever learned up to that point in my life. I have a theatrical background and played in lots of musicals at secondary school. But by the age of seventeen or eighteen I found them too superficial and structurally rigid. Above all, I rejected the narrative nature of theatre. In *This is a picture of a person I don't know* I literally used parts from the musical *A chorus line* as well as video technology to play with the audience's perception of time. During my training at the SNDO, my projects were generally fairly abstract, scientific and experimental, largely because of my resistance to narrative structure. I was looking for different ways of telling stories. The performance included pictures of me preparing to take to the stage and of the audience coming in.'

How did you turn this hotchpotch into a solid choreography?

'The frame on which I hung the work was love. I do not choreograph from the floor, working from scratch and inventing everything in the rehearsal room. I always start with a concept, initially collecting lots of information and then discarding whatever is superfluous. In *This is a picture of a person I don't know* I use love as a metaphor for doing an audition, the audition for the musical. The fragments from the musical are very funny and absurd for the audience. During the performance I deliberately omit to explain the logic behind my spectacular dance sequences. Until, that is, I read out a text about my lost love and loneliness. This has a hard and direct impact. The story becomes clear to the audience, because they are able to tie up all the loose ends. I use the structure of the story as a way of playing with the spectator's memory and imagination. I force them to use their consciousness differently and to resolve the logic of my performance like a puzzle. Transparency for the spectator is a very important element for me. I want the audience to be able to follow my choices, so that I am not the only one experiencing my subjective opinion and vision.'

What element is so important in your work that it keeps recurring?

'I have often been bored while looking at contemporary dance productions. Sure, there were plenty of beautiful and amazing things, but what I missed during most of the performances was humour. For me it's really important that people are able to laugh during the show. The dance sector tends to take itself very seriously, there's a kind of fear that it might otherwise sink away in the margins. Dance is a minority art form, you might as well accept that. I see laughter as a way of establishing direct contact with the audience. It's an invitation to the people to be close to you.'

Do you also want to include politics in your work and make statements about the world around you?

'Politics, to me, doesn't mean brandishing banners or standing up for Africa. I do express myself politically, but that is articulated physically on stage, in the way I demonstrate the body in relation to its surroundings. Politics for me is not an explicit but an implicit field. It has to do with working with people from different disciplines and choosing to show my work at specific festivals. I am performing

2007-2008

- touring in Dansclick with *This is a picture of a person I don't know*, September to mid-November 2007.
- Thereafter, extra performances of *This is a picture of a person I don't know*.
- Faura has a part in *While we were holding it together* by Ivana Müller.

2008

- Starts a new group production at Theater Gasthuis in Amsterdam in co-production with Lacaldera-Barcelona.
- Thereafter, working on and performing *Striptease*.
- Dancing with Ivana Müller

at a festival in Slovenia, for instance, where they don't really have the money to pay me. But dance is not yet very developed there, and I am happy to help this process by showing some contemporary work. That, too, is a form of politics. Politics for me is above all about relationships, social awareness and not blindly accepting things as they are.'

Your roots are in Barcelona. Do you see them growing further there? In other words: does your future lie in Catalonia and where do you stand in relation to the Dutch dance climate?

'There is a movement going on in Barcelona at the moment that opens up a lot of prospects for dancers. I took part in a programme for choreographers who are working abroad. That same Catalan organization has also invited me to make something for 2008. The funding and subsidy structure in the Netherlands has become so choked that artists are constantly struggling to survive. To be fair, there is a lot of 'dance consumption' among the public and an interesting international network, but the system is very inward-looking. Spain seems to be waking up to contemporary dance, lots of new things are happening there.'

What moment during the work process gives you the greatest satisfaction?

'That's a question I cannot answer. If I had an answer, it would mean that the work process always followed the same pattern and that is simply not the case. I love the unpredictable, the state of not knowing.'

What does the coming period look like?

'At the moment I have no idea where things are heading. I have lost my way. But being lost is a wonderful feeling. That is one of the reasons why I really love being an artist.'

Nine facts about Pere Faura

- 1 In 'ordinary life' he enjoys disco dancing.
- 2 After three solo performances, it's time for a new challenge.
- 3 He started taking music lessons when he was five, played flute, sang, did drama and was a member of orchestras until the age of twenty.
- 4 Music is what inspires him most.
- 5 Before making a new piece, he chooses a special number to serve as inspiration. This number need not necessarily feature in the piece.
- 6 Humour is an important part of his work.
- 7 He would like most of all to work with a fixed team of people.
- 8 So far his dramatic advisor is the only person with whom he maintains a long-term working relationship.
- 9 *A chorus line* is his favourite musical.



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