

# Belgian troupe caps festival with a triumphant performance

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MONTREAL'S *Festival International de Nouvelle Danse (FIND)* came to a foot-stamping conclusion Sunday evening at Théâtre Maison-veuve with a triumphant closing performance by the Belgian company *Ultima Vez*. The show, entitled *Always the Same Lies*, capped 12 days of performances, film screenings and roundtable discussions at sites throughout the downtown area.

*Always the Same Lies*, seen here

in its first North American production, is the latest creation of Flemish choreographer Wim Vandekeybus. It's a touching, gregarious and very funny work, loosely based on the reminiscences of an 87-year-old friend of the choreographer.

Le vieux Carlo, as he is called in the program, appeared in film clips and in tape recordings of a gravelly, world-tested voice. Mostly, Carlo spoke through the mouths of the eight performers, whose sporadic retelling of his pithy anecdotes sparked a free-wheeling series of games and stage actions.

The show's central prop and met-

aphor was the egg. Dozens of eggs were tossed, stacked, laid upon like beds and even scrambled on the smoking seat of a wooden chair. The methodical absurdity of these actions, during which amazingly few eggs were broken, mined the same comic vein as Chaplin and the Marx Brothers. Yet Vandekeybus also provoked the viewer to consider his eggs as more than tokens in a routine. They were also mysterious and germinal vessels, both strong and fragile, teetering always between new beginnings and catastrophic ends.

And if the end came, well, it was only an egg. In one of Carlo's re-

counted musings, the old man considered whom he should ask to scatter his ashes in the sea. He was willing to pay to have it done right, but he was afraid that once he was dead, his agent might drink the money and dump the ashes in the garbage. The worry, like most of Vandekeybus's show, was poised between a joke and a blunt perception of the uncertainties of life.

The dance segments of this "theatre event" (Vandekeybus's preferred term) were energetic, playful affairs, the men's dances often resembling the roughhousing of a schoolyard. The women were more dramatic,

heaving up from the floor into wild leaps and fast rolls, stamping their amplified feet, swishing their unbound hair. They were also more dangerous and aggressive than the men, who in one sequence worked hard to prevent the women from smashing the eggs. In the context of a generally humane show, it seemed a sly poke at the notion that women are inherently more nurturing than men.

*Ultima Vez* brought a full house to the 1,500-seat Théâtre Maison-veuve, although full houses have proved almost routine at the fourth FIND, which is held every two

years. Organizers said the \$2.1-million festival sold out 36 of 41 performances.

Those in attendance saw a generally strong collection of works, including recent pieces by leading Europeans such as Anne Teresa de Keersmaecker, and new creations by important Canadians such as Paul-André Fortier. The financial and artistic successes of the event seem to augur well for FIND's evolution into an annual event, beginning next fall.

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