

# CALENDAR

DANCE REVIEW

## Vandekeybus' 'Same Lies': Physical and Sly

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**W**im Vandekeybus dances in a world of shattered, shifting perspectives.

Chairs hang on their sides in mid-air. A huge carpet suddenly rises to become a tapestry, a wall, a stained-glass window. Desperate runners leap headlong into space, roll to the floor and then up onto their feet again. Movements we've seen in TV news footage of riot, combat and violent crime return in choreography defining contemporary relationships.

At 28, this Belgian choreographer has made a career of necessary roughness and unexpected spatial displacements. But the greatest shock of his "Always the Same Lies," Saturday at Occidental College, may have been his sly whimsy. Vandekeybus' nine-dancer company, *Ultima Vez*, specializes in high-risk physical confrontations—wearing knee and elbow pads for survival. However, there's no attempt to intimidate the audience either kinetically or intellectually.

Indeed, Vandekeybus keeps undercutting the major moments of this 3-month-old, 80-minute image-collage through off-the-wall eccentricity and playful parodies of performance art. You want deconstruction? They'll saw apart a chair. You like confessional self-



TONY BARNARD / Los Angeles Times

*Ultima Vez* in "Always the Same Lies": high-risk physical confrontations, off-the-wall eccentricity, playful parodies of performance art.

dramatization? Here it comes—in four or five languages.

Vandekeybus' friendship with 88-year-old Carlo Wegener forms the core of the piece, with Wegener seen in home movies, heard on the soundtrack and evoked through the objects that dancers carry throughout the evening.

Brown eggs prove the most novel of these choreographic aids—not only boiled and cooked onstage but

tossed, stacked and used as a mattress. They also figure in Vandekeybus' most overt statement of sexual conflict, with three women in hammocks trying to disrupt the men's attempt to construct a platform of foam egg trays.

Do the women represent irrational impulse here? Very possibly, but the men's dogged, collaborative need to complete a meaningless task makes an even more devastating comment on male bonding and obsession with control.

The abuse of chairs, microphones and dresses serve as sub-motifs, but it is those eggs that symbolize the combination of vulnerability and resilience we find in the brilliant, careening group dances set to both rhythmic a capella music by Charo Calvo and assaultive "speedmetaljazz" by Peter Vermeersch.

Presented by the Dance Gallery, the Keck Theater performances of "Always the Same Lies" gave Los Angeles a glimpse of a generation of international trailblazers that we practically never see. In a dance community dominated by timid abstraction, the sheer physical danger embraced by *Ultima Vez* made the evening an indispensable experience.

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