

# Wim Vandekeybus is trying to move toward truth with 'Always the Same Lies'

By Christine Temin  
GLOBE STAFF

Seven hundred and twenty eggs play a major part in Wim Vandekeybus' latest production, "Always the Same Lies," which Dance Umbrella

and The Arts Company are presenting tomorrow through Saturday at the Emerson Majestic Theater. Vandekeybus is a 28-year-old Flemish choreographer — although maybe "choreographer" is the wrong term, since his works mix sound, video,

film, still photographs, movement that is not based in any conventional technique, and such bizarre props as those eggs. He calls his works "plays" rather than "dances."

For a tiny country, Belgium has turned out a surprising number of adventurous young choreographers lately, including Vandekeybus and Anne Teresa de Keersmaeker, who is probably still the best known in America. Vandekeybus isn't sure of the cause of this phenomenon, but he does note that it's hardly an insular one. Belgian dance troupes are international in their composition and in their touring. There are seven different nationalities represented in Vandekeybus' eight-dancer company. And when he takes his show on the road, he *moves*. During one year he and his company performed his "The Bearers of Bad News" 160 times — and never more than three times in any one city.

Vandekeybus comes from a non-art family — his father is a veterinarian — and he studied psychology at the University of Leuven. His arts experiences vary from intensive study of the tango to posing for Robert Mapplethorpe photos to performing with Jan Fabre's experimental theater. In 1985 he branched out on his own, forming his company. *Ultima Vez* — Spanish for "the last time." Since then, he has made four evening-length works, collected two New York "Bessie" awards — do we still need to say that the Bessie is the dance world's Oscar? — and worked all over Europe.

His plays are full of striking images and ideas, although they don't tell linear stories and Vandekeybus doesn't care if his audiences are able to figure out his sources. "The things



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Choreographer Wim Vandekeybus' latest production appears tomorrow through Saturday at the Emerson Majestic Theater.

you can't capture are the things that are most valuable," he says. He *does* care that the audience be involved, though. "For me, the audience is the second creator of my work."

The movement in his works is often physically dangerous. The per-

formers fly, for instance. Not with wires, *a la* Peter Pan, but by hurling themselves through the air, trusting that someone will catch them. There's trust, too, in the brick-throwing sequence in one of his works. He taught a dancer to ignore

her instinct for self-preservation, to throw a brick up in the air and not budge as it fell. She had to depend on another dancer to scurry her out of the way in the nick of time.

Now about those eggs. Vandekeybus explains them simply. "Carlo was cooking an egg for me," he says. Carlo is Carlo Wegener, an 88-year-old actor Vandekeybus befriended after he found him sitting on a pier, gazing out into the ocean. Wegener is the inspiration for "Always the Same Lies," which includes filmed sequences of him and performers acting out vignettes that have to do with his life. Part of the play's set is a tapestry of 400 women's dresses that cover the floor and eventually rise up to form a backdrop. Backlit, they look like stained glass. They were based on Vandekeybus and Wegener cleaning 15 years' worth of trash off the floor of Wegener's tiny apartment, after which Wegener thought the floor looked too bare. So he dragged the clothes of his long-dead third wife out of the closet, and covered the wood floor with them.

The eggs are also based on Vandekeybus' memory of a childhood sport that involved tossing and catching eggs. In "Always the Same Lies" the performers manipulate the eggs in several different ways. They form a bed of eggs on which two dancers lie. ("They break one or two, with their shoes," Vandekeybus says.) They use them as offerings and as emblems — of the everyday nature of life, and of life's strength and fragility. They even cook a few of the eggs, eating them onstage. Still, that leaves hundreds of them still intact. After the Boston performances, they'll go to a worthy cause — a kitchen that feeds the homeless.

# Living Arts

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