

BACK STAGE

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Fase

Reviewed by Lisa Jo Sagolla

Presented by The Kitchen in association with Rosas, at The Kitchen, 512 W. 19th St., NYC, Sept. 22-26.

Minimalism is not dead, dated, or dull! In the hands of the exceptionally gifted Belgian choreographer **Anne Teresa De Keersmaecker** it proves to be a mesmerizing and expressive approach to dance making.

While a student at New York University in 1981, De Keersmaecker choreographed an astoundingly original solo and a duet to music by **Steve Reich**, who was experimenting with "phasing"—the repetition of a pattern that is progressively shifted through gradual rhythmic or melodic adjustments. The following year she made two additional duets to Reich's

compositions and presented the four dances as an evening-length suite titled "Fase." The choreographer and her original partner, **Michele Anne De Mey**, recently revived this work at The Kitchen.

While one could marvel at the ingenious choreographic design of these dances, in which short movement patterns are repeated and altered in sync with the "phasing" of the music, what was most amazing about the performance was the dancers' superb execution of this disarmingly difficult piece.

The women dance a phrase in unison a mind-boggling number of times—too many to count without getting lost and wondering if you had just finished or were just beginning the 58th repetition. Suddenly, one dancer is a full count ahead of the other. How and when did that happen? Baffled, we watch them more closely, intent on not missing it the next time. In spite of our rapt atten-

tion, they shift back into unison imperceptibly, and precisely on the beginning of what must, by now, be about the 142nd repetition of the phrase!

"Fase" demonstrates that minimalist work—which typically entraps audiences with its seductive orderliness or hypnotizing repetitions—can also be emotionally involving. The performers' extraordinary concentration and passionate physical intensity push the experience beyond the cerebral. We empathize with them kinesthetically, becoming aware of what it must feel like to do these movements and imagining psychological states that would prompt them. We grow deeply connected to what's happening in their bodies, secure in the repetitions, nervous about each little change, and somewhat anxious about when and how it will all end.

Brava to two brilliantly bewitching Belgian belles!