

SURVIVING TO NUMBER 3

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What would you do with/to a dead body? And, conversely, what could a dead body do with/to you? What impact might that which we inflict on others have on our own being? These might be the questions that structure the dance performance *Surviving to number 3* in which the will-less body of Aitana Cordero is surrendered to the manipulations and good grace of three different individuals.

When Aitana Cordero lies sprawled on the floor, one cannot forget that she is far from dead, and lends herself *willingly* to what happens next. This is not to say that she doesn't succeed in unbending or utterly give herself up to her three successive partners in a breath-taking endurance test (for seamless passivity requires as much mastery as does ostensible activity) but that *Surviving to number 3* is less about a one-way victimization process than about how a seemingly defenseless body can take revenge on its aggressor. In Hegelian terms, it reverses the common understanding of the master-slave (or victim-torturer) relationship in highlighting how a slave might have as much power on its master as the other way around. Or, in still other –here, Freudian—terms, how it embodies a kind of *return of the repressed*.

Under the form of repulsion, bodily exhaustion and, finally, the fading itself of their own desire, the aggressors of Aitana's passive body are offered unexpected resistances. At first seduced by the arbitrary power of their own will, each in their own way and according to their own physicality and temperament, they proceed to subdue her body to their whims. Yet, as they attempt to take over Aitana's body, they become reduced to merely creep and gnarl. What had seemed an easy and grimly delightful undertaking progressively appears to change into a sad and degrading practice. As they struggle to conquer Aitana's body, they make visible what remains out of sight: the weight of her body, its physical constitution and, last but not least, the contradictory nature of desire itself. As they evolve at ground level, their gestures unveil the kinship of apparently dissimilar feelings and their expressions. The thin line between attraction and repulsion, bliss and abjection, boredom and fascination becomes blurred to offer a representation of the tensions that structure the human experience. In this way *Surviving to number 3* participates in a discourse aimed at deconstructing common understandings of the body and the human experience, while simultaneously helping to build a different knowledge about the same. Aitana's piece seems to claim that passive resistance might actually be the best form of attack and that, ultimately, intimacy always results from a mutual understanding between willful individuals. We might as well fall prey to our own drives.

In *Surviving to number 3*, the body –that of Aitana and those of her partners— becomes the site of an existentialist reflection engaging with contemporary discussions taking place in different cultural contexts. Yet, whereas each of the dancers wears common urban outfits, the lighting seems functional and the soundscape is drastically reduced, *Surviving to number 3* succeeds in providing a complex aesthetic experience and retains a certain classical air. Both the structure

with prologue and three duets punctuate the piece so as to temper and to counterpoint the violence of the dance itself. Both traditional and utterly contemporary, *Surviving to number 3* will delight those interested in the development of dance as a practice engaged with contemporary issues as much as those who still go to the theater to be mesmerized by the erudite mechanism of a beautiful spectacle.

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