



Stoel review - mischief and musical chairs in dance duo's spellbinding show

Zoo Southside, Edinburgh Ordinary chairs become monsters, vehicles and a perilous walkway in Compagnie Nyash's remarkable performance for over-threes

Chris Wiegand

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Fifteen junkshop chairs enter the stage: half are pushed on in a rickety procession by one dancer, the others are piled high and given an unwieldy piggyback by her partner. They are precisely placed around the space, creating an obstacle course for the duo, who play games of trust, tenderness and cruelty - with the occasional round of musical chairs thrown in.

Listed in the children's section of the Edinburgh festival programme, this remarkable wordless dance show by Belgium's Compagnie Nyash, performed to cello music, at times resembles an unlikely kids' version of *Cafe Müller*. In Pina Bausch's anguished classic, sleepwalking dancers stumble through a similar grid of chairs and tables. As Bausch's dancers often do, the couple in *Stoel* alternately imprison, liberate and challenge each other.

All of which sounds a mite heavy for a show designed for the over-threes. But if there are flashes of intensity then there is plenty of gentle humour and mischief too, not least when three of the chairs are upturned and morph into a chorus of grumbling monsters.



Sophisticated ... Stoel (Chair). Photograph: Alice Piemme

Just as children would, the duo create unexpected worlds of play with these props, much like the Shaolin Temple monks find multiple uses for Antony Gormley's boxes in Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui's equally family-friendly Sutra. Suddenly we find ourselves in an action adventure as the chairs become a runaway vehicle that sends the duo into spasms of fear and joy; in another configuration they turn into a perilous walkway through a blast of smoke.

Choreographed by Caroline Cornélis, and deftly danced by Miko Shimura and Colin Jolet, the show manages to turn these mismatched chairs into characters in their own right - our eyes follow them as they would individual dancers in a company. At the end, when they are arranged in rows to observe the duo's bows, the chairs form a mirror audience and their collective presence is felt every bit as much as our own. This is a sophisticated, spellbinding show for children but one that deserves to be seen by all ages.

● At Zoo Southside, Edinburgh, until 14 August.

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