pzazz



Liefde/Amour

PITCHO WOMBA KONGA / KVS

Love from the End



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How far should we go for love before we can say we have tried everything? And what remains of us when love ends? These are the questions that echo throughout 'Liefde/Amour', a performance by Pitcho Womba Konga in KVS, inspired by Brigitte Giraud's novel 'L'amour est très surestimé' (Love Is Very Overrated). Rather than telling a single story, the work unfolds as a collage of endings—fragments of love stories that reveal not only loss and separation, but also resilience, humour, and the possibility of beginning again.

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The evening starts unexpectedly: a party in the middle of the stage. While the audience enters the theatre and searches for their seats, the performers are already there, dancing, talking, celebrating. Spectators are subtly invited to join them, to step into the space. It feels like a gentle metaphor: every love story begins with the courage to show up, to enter the room, to take part in something uncertain and promising. Only after this festive opening does the performance settle into its central theme: the end of love.

What makes this production compelling is its choice to speak about love from its endings. Break-ups, divorces, betrayal, widowhood, emotional distance — each story explores a different form of separation and what it reveals about those who remain. The performance is partly an adaptation of Giraud's novel and partly newly written material, and this tension between reference and creation sometimes creates a sense of dissonance, especially in the transitions. Yet it also allows the piece to move freely between intimate storytelling and broader reflections on contemporary relationships.

The tension between what the casting suggests and what the text delivers creates a layer of ambiguity.

The cast — five women of colour (Lisette Ma Neza, Marie Daulne, Clarice Malamba (Nsangu), Rokia Bamba and Caro Abutoh) — carries the performance with strength and sensitivity. The play is performed half in Flemish and half in French, reflecting the multilingual and multicultural reality of Brussels while giving dynamism to the play. Their presence on stage is powerful, even though the dynamics of the relationships portrayed often remain rooted in rather classical heterosexual love structures and inherited ideals of what a family, partnership and domestic life should look like.

Dominant narratives

This choice of casting also raises interesting questions. The presence of five women of colour on stage seems to open the possibility of imagining alternative forms of family and love, perhaps beyond heterosexual norms. Yet the dialogues often bring us back to very familiar and normative relationship patterns, where the partners are implicitly men and the frustrations revolve around well-known clichés of heterosexual couple dynamics. This tension between what the casting suggests and what the text delivers creates a layer of ambiguity, leaving the audience wondering whether this contrast is intentional or simply an unconscious return to dominant narratives of love and family, which can be felt like a missed opportunity for a stronger feminist reclaiming of love, family narratives, and emancipation.

The piece highlights how, in many cultures, divorce is still perceived as failure, even though it might ultimately benefit everyone involved.

The structure of the piece resembles a collection of stories rather than a linear narrative. One moment, we witness the silent realization that love has disappeared from a relationship: the body reacts before the mind admits it, turning familiar habits and even the partner's breath into sources of discomfort. Another moment focuses on parents who must announce their divorce to their children, clumsily trying to soften the blow by promising "two birthdays and two Christmases". It is both tragic and absurd: a desperate attempt to protect children from a truth that cannot be softened.

The perspective of the child of divorce, embodied by Lizette Ma Neza, is particularly touching. Through song and spoken word, the child imagines becoming a nomad, moving between homes, receiving bad grades that no one questions, visiting psychologists without understanding why, and constantly wondering whether the separation was somehow their fault. The piece highlights how, in many cultures, divorce is still perceived as failure, even though it might ultimately benefit everyone involved. The refrain that parents often repeat — "it will never be us" — echoes painfully, reminding us of the fragility of all promises.

Emotional refrains

Objects and spaces also play an important role in the performance. In one scene, large curtains stretching from backstage to the front are slowly folded by the performers, transforming the stage into something resembling a domestic space. The gesture evokes the folding of bedsheets in a household, turning theatrical material into everyday life. Later, those same sheets suggest a wedding dress, subtly linking the beginning and the end of love. These visual moments are among the most poetic in the piece, showing how love lives not only in words but in gestures and routines.

Another powerful section addresses widowhood, exploring how widows are perceived by society and how they perceive themselves. Free from daily domestic responsibilities yet marked by loss, they exist in a space between admiration and pity. The performance does not present widowhood only as tragedy but also as a complex transformation: a new life emerging from absence.

One of the most touching aspects of the production is how it embraces contradiction.

Music plays a crucial role throughout the show. The mix of spoken word, instrumentals, theatre, slam poetry and singing creates a rhythm that carries the audience through moments of despair and tenderness. Electro, gospel, Afro beats and melodies intertwine, and the songs often function as emotional refrains, softening the weight of loss. There is something deeply recognizable in this choice: when love ends, songs are often the first refuge we seek. The melodies linger even after the performance ends, like memories that refuse to fade.

Starting over

One of the most touching aspects of the production is how it embraces contradiction. Love is portrayed as painful and high maintenance, yet the characters repeatedly show their willingness to experience it again. The final text, delivered by Rokia Bamba, captures this paradox beautifully: despite the pain, despite the loss, she would do it all over again. Love, even when it ends, remains something worth risking.

Ultimately, 'Liefde/Amour' is less about love itself and more about what remains after it. It is about fatigue and repetition, about fighting over words that mean almost the same, about silence and longing, about children trying to understand adult decisions, about women reclaiming their voices, and about the quiet courage of starting over. By beginning with endings, the performance opens a space for reflection: perhaps love is not overrated, but misunderstood — not a destination, but a series of encounters, losses, and new beginnings.

The party at the beginning returns as a silent metaphor at the end. To love, to lose, to start again — all of it requires the same simple, difficult gesture: stepping into the room.