

Performance

## Intimate cabinets in the E-Werk - but only filmed

By Bettina Schulte – Wed, April 28, 2021

**Julie Jaffrennou and the Compagnie LaPerformance with "Zerbrechlichkeit and andere Geschichten"/„Brittleness and other stories“: A film has to replace the impossible premiere at E-Werk Freiburg.**



Tenderness: Michael Schmitter and Salim Ben Mammour – Photo: Maurice Korbel

For a long time they had hoped that it would be possible to show this performance in the great hall of the Freiburg E-Werk. The preparation phase lasted almost a year; the construction in the hall was complicated: intimate cabinets separated by black panels, a uniform blue floor, intense red light that changes to pale white. Hardly any props: red children's chairs, ropes for jumping and tying up, sacks to hold a body, a pile of cloth. The premiere of "Brittleness and other stories", a production by Julie Jaffrennou and the Compagnie LaPerformance, part two of the "Obeying Life" trilogy, unfortunately had to take place without an audience with only a few selected guests.

Insight into this outstanding performance, a coproduction with the festival 6Tagefrei in Stuttgart, is given through a film that is not a live stream. Much better than nothing, but much too little to even come close to doing justice to this performance. Because the audience members are part of the action in this almost two-hour piece. At some point they themselves are allowed to sit in the children's chairs, mute and silent and perplexed, while from the other cabinets around them strange noises penetrate their ears. A scornful laugh, a loud, almost terrifying snorting.

Where are we? Julie Jaffrenou's new performance leaves the dance genre far behind. There is hardly any more dancing here. Instead rope jumping, for example. Father, mother, child. The parents (the actors Michael Schmitter and Tjadke Biallowons) swing the rope always breaking into an ugly laugh, without motivation, it seems. The son (the fabulous, slim as well as athletic, dancer Salim Ben Mammar) jumps fast and faster, high and higher, until he gets tangled up. Again and again he struggles, again and again his parents mock him. A nightmare.

Memories of childhood: that is a leitmotif of the touching evening. The gray-haired dancer Olivia Maridjan-Koop, who is very delicate in shape, writhes laboriously out of a colorful sleeping bag, then sits there, lonely, abandoned, her thumb sunk in her mouth, one sees it with great discomfort. Then she rolls down her tights, sits down on a chair, it looks like she relieves herself. In another scene, the three dancers Alice Gartenschläger, Tjadke Biallowons and Olivia Maridjan-Koop talk about their first - rather sobering - erotic experiences with tongues stuck in their mouths and suddenly wet pants. Another scene demonstrates without a word the rapprochement between man and woman as an ambivalent process between attraction and repulsion. All of this is observed very closely and implemented very precisely, straightforward, limited to the essentials, sometimes the actors appear as if cut out in the abstract setting.

The strongest encounter takes place between two men. Are they father and son? Are they lovers? One doesn't know. Michael Schmitter, whom one has never seen so open, so exposed - it is almost a shock - stamps with inarticulate, growling noises in a circle around the sack from which he has just freed himself. What is he doing there? Why is he doing it?

Salim Ben Mammam, half a portion compared to the physical force of the tall actor, jumps at him, looking for a fight, at the same time looking for closeness, both of them curl up in an embrace that couldn't be more intimate. A picture that remains.

An evening that remains.

Stream on May 1st at 8.30 p.m. via # [infreiburgzuhause.de](https://www.instagram.com/infreiburgzuhause.de)