

Tanztheater Wuppertal: Bon Voyage, Bob ... review – love, loss and Pina

The loss of the company's founder Pina Bausch a decade ago is at the heart of this meticulous meditation on grief and death [Lyndsey Winship](#)

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Bon Voyage, Bob ... is only the second new full-length work by Tanztheater Wuppertal since founder Pina Bausch's death 10 years ago, and is a less obvious homage to Bausch than the first (Dimitris Papaioannou's *Since She*). However, while it takes the company in a different direction, it dwells, still, on death and loss.

Creator Alan Lucien Øyen is a Norwegian choreographer and playwright who uses text, dance and music to cinematic effect in a piece that's meticulously crafted and confidently realised. There's much talking, but it's not a play – rather, a collection of shifting memories, expanded, refracted, and perhaps embroidered into a script that came out of long conversations with the cast in which the spectre of death hangs heavily.



There's a bit-part for love, but it's mainly loss. Of brothers and fathers, in murders and especially suicides, in scenes tragic, surreal, funny or matter-of-fact: a funeral director who is far too frank about his business; Julie Shanahan marvelling at the colossal size of a tear on a cinema screen compared with her own "tiny, insignificant" ones. The dancing offers texture and breathing space when there's nothing left to say, mostly in solos that make wonderful use of the performers, whether the light, molten whoosh of Jonathan Fredrickson's long limbs or dancers Aida Vainieri and H el ena Pikon, who have mastered the depth that lies in doing very little.



What  ylen has taken wholesale from Bausch is her attitude to running times. At three and a half hours, it's on the trying side, especially in a work without narrative propulsion that repeats and resets like an Escher staircase. Time has stopped on stage (the clock's hands frozen), just as time stops in grief – what the poet Denise Riley calls "time lived without its flow" – that stasis and limbo underlined by a succession of mournful musical refrains, each one sounding like the bittersweet coda of a film: ending after ending, death after death.

Bon Voyage, Bob ... has itself a very poignant ending. I won't describe it, but it feels as if for all that this piece takes Tanztheater Wuppertal on a fruitful new path, it has really been about Pina all along.

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