

THE Arts

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Creators Creating, Identities Fragmenting

As the French Institute Alliance Française's festival Crossing the Line was winding down — which is bittersweet, for it has been splendid — it presented four

DANCE REVIEW

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singular artists on film and in person. On Wednesday, the filmmaker Olivier Assayas was at the institute to introduce "Eldorado/Preljocaj," a two-part film documenting "Eldorado (Sonntags Abschied)," a dance by Angelin Preljocaj.

In "Creation, Part One," Mr. Assayas chronicles the choreographic process; "Sonntags Abschied, Part Two" shows the completed dance. During his opening remarks, Mr. Assayas said his approach to filmmaking shared a thread with choreography. As he put it, "The way I was working with my actors, the way I was using a handheld camera — I was designing some of my shots like dance steps."

Mr. Preljocaj's decision to set his dance to music by Karlheinz Stockhausen cemented Mr. Assayas's decision to take on the project. In the first film, the creative process unfolds as if it were a drama. Along with lively interviews with Stockhausen, filmed just before his death, there is ex-



OLIVIER ASSAYAS

Crossing the Line A scene from Olivier Assayas's "Eldorado/Preljocaj," shown at the French Institute Alliance Française. "Diptych," also in the Crossing the Line festival, was at Performance Space 122.

tensive rehearsal footage, which begins with tight shots of Mr. Preljocaj rolling on the floor with his dancers. But as satisfying as Mr. Assayas's depiction of the creative process is, the dance itself disappoints. Mr. Preljocaj's stilted and generic choreography sucks the life out of Stockhausen's eccentric music.

On Friday night, at Performance Space 122, Rachid Ouramdane and Pascal Rambert offered a much more satisfying adventure in "Diptych," a double bill featuring two autonomous solos. Mr. Ouramdane's extraordinary work "A standing boy," created in 2006, is performed by Mr. Rambert, who keeps his eyes closed and stands with his back facing the audience on a white stage. The walls and the floor, which

buckles in sections, enclose Mr. Rambert like a vise as he moves slowly, bending his torso backward and lifting his arms in a series of floating, sensual meditations.

The repetitive, atmospheric score, by Alexandre Meyer, who plays the electric guitar, serves as a window into Mr. Rambert's mind. The music is complemented by a video environment. Images of nature float past: a snowy mountain gives way to a spring day, while a young boy, moving like molasses, mirrors Mr. Rambert. Any semblance of time or reality is blurred in this depiction of a fragmented identity, and gradually Mr. Rambert's pres-

ence seems to dissolve.

In contrast with Mr. Ouramdane's white setting, the other solo, "With my own hands," a work by Mr. Rambert presented in Performance Space 122's intimate first-floor theater, begins in pitch black (an experience that would have been more powerful without the pre-performance warning). As the audience sits in the dark, a woman (Kate Moran) recites a monologue about suicide, dispassionately describing the events that have led her to her current state. Or is she really a woman? When microscopic lights flicker on her naked body, Ms. Moran is equipped with a penis. Here, as with Mr. Ouramdane's solo, the issue of identity is palpable.

While the melancholy figure in "A standing boy" could be a memory of Ms. Moran's character, the link between the two episodes is rooted in solitary sensation. Just as Mr. Rambert's eyes are closed in "A standing boy," the viewer, surrounded by darkness, is virtually blinded in "With my own hands." In this unflinching "Diptych," each work, a little haunting, sometimes creepy and always mesmerizing, nourishes the other.

Crossing the Line continues through Saturday at various locations; (212) 355-6100 or fiaf.org.