Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Triumph

Sarah Elgart · Wednesday, September 2nd, 2015

When I worked with Dance Camera West, we often had discussions about what constituted the difference between a dance film and a music video that featured dance. These discussions were compelling and often difficult to resolve, especially when a popular recording artist employed a well-known stage choreographer of great artistic integrity. Some felt that a music video was automatically defined by the presence of lip-syncing, while others felt the answer lay within the original intent of the film and who had underwritten it… At the end of the day, what and/or who was being promoted – the dance or the song? And did it matter?

Dancer Nandi Bhebhe in a moment from Triumph

What is so powerful for me is when the answer lies somewhere in between – that is to say when a dance and its union with a song is so strong and so successful that you can never quite hear the one without imagining the other. This for me is the case with **Triumph**, a beautiful, self-proclaimed music video for Gwilym Gold, and his album *A Paradise.* Shot entirely in black and white with beautiful lighting, and amazing and visceral dance by Nandi Bhebhe, the framing is often centered on the dancer's torso and core. While the dance looks to me to be at least partially choreographed, it succeeds as sheer, raw, human self-expression, completely implacable in its urgency, combining movement that seems almost African with contemporary.

Wearing a cone bra that looks like it was ripped from Madonna's wardrobe, Behbhe's physical prowess is both undeniable and untraditional for music videos. Of this dancer's stunning performance, director Holly Blakely said, *"I wanted to show her massive power, beauty, resilience, create something almost lucid and fertile in a way that I wish we saw women represented more often."*

Nandi Bhebhe triumphs in "Triumph"

All I can say is **YES.** As evidenced by its initial premiere on NOWNESS, ultimately **Triumph** succeeds both as a music video for a recording artist, and a gorgeous short dance film of high cinematic and conceptual integrity.

As far as I'm concerned, **Triumph** is a triumph.

Enjoy.

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