

## Danced Creation Myth

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In the beginning was the end declares WILHELM GROENER in Ballhaus Ost. WILHELM GROENER drifts off into the mythical in the company's new production in Ballhaus Ost. There is a lot of darkness to penetrate until one engages with the contemplative atmosphere. **"In the Beginning was the End"** sounds paradoxical and reminds one of the first and the last letter of the Greek alphabet, the alpha and the omega, which stands in Christian thought for the beginning and the end of the world. At least the mysteriously veiled metaphors that the conceptual team, comprising the visual artist Mariola Groener and the dancer-choreographer Günther Wilhelm, suggest such thoughts.

A table with candles reveals itself to the audience out of the darkness. A woman stands in front, a man mirrors her; in the pose of the mysterious Sphinx, so that one suspects that there are two more figures present than are visible. "This is the End", sing all four performers gospel-like in the darkness after the candle is extinguished. "Waiting for the Summer Rain", is then heard more loudly and the heavens actually hear the request and send a storm and rain. In a misty atmosphere of creation and dim lighting, the four stand motionless, humming, constantly trying to rise out of the chaos guided by arm movements. The sequence is moving and reminds one, in the turning finger movements of the performers, of the ballet-like motion of the planets. The recited Latin text creates a liturgical reference.

From erratic hand movements, a shaking phrase occurs until the entire body quakes as if one is at a Shaker prayer meeting. The table in the background now serving as an altar is approached with pleading, slips, and groans, until at the point of ecstasy, the dancers collapse. Even in this state, the head and gaze are directed heavenwards.

This spacial composition is ascetically strict, even when someone moves forwards, kneeling, another whistles, two more seem to be pointing towards a sign in the firmament. A little noise disturbs the quiet chirping somewhat. The two men pile on top of each other; the women balance head to head and push against each other. One of them deposits herself out of her headstand onto one of the squatting figures, a man walks on bended knees. The hopping creates a rhythm, hands are grasped, interlocked, until a man leaps on a woman, seeking refuge. She rocks him protectively and places him on the altar table where he, exhibiting his wounds, sways to and fro. One after the other, they assemble around the altar, the upper pair facing each other, initially with hands before their eyes as if blinded; before and behind the table the other two face toward the centre.

The most suggestive image of the evening is created when out of the quartet, eight arms slowly differentiate whilst rising and falling in opposite directions, cramped and wide, a pulsing singular body emerges. This ritual is as clear and rigorous as a Gregorian chant. Then the light is extinguished and a powerful soprano vocal swells. Again, they all stand at the front, again a candle is burning. It illuminates into the auditorium.

Rather than pure dance, for 60 minutes WILHELM GROENER presents a moving sculpture of sustained black-and-white-aesthetics right through to the costume design. Together with Maria Francesca Scaroni, Ulrich Huhn and the hidden singer Johanna Peine, they create a cleansing and purifying effect upon the spectator.