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## Hans Van den Broeck and Soit are in dark places

14/11/13, 16.28 | PATRICK JORDENS



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The Brussels choreographer Hans Van den Broeck, known for productions with large casts, is working for the first time with just two dancers in a piece inspired by the US crime writer James Ellroy.

More particularly, Hans Van den Broeck (known for *Messiah Run!*) has drawn his inspiration from James Ellroy's 1996 autobiographical novel *My Dark Places*, in which the writer tells the story of the investigation of his mother's murder in Los Angeles. She was strangled when Ellroy was barely ten years old. Much later, after he had already built up quite a reputation as a writer of crime fiction, Ellroy, with the help of a detective, tried himself – unsuccessfully – to finally solve the case.

"I was in LA myself when I read the book and I was completely sold straight away," recalls an enthusiastic Hans Van den Broeck, artistic director of the SOIT dance company. "Because it has such a tragic and obsessive undertone: that man has really been obsessed by that loss throughout his whole life. It led to him becoming a writer, of course, but also, among other things, to a love-hate relationship with women. I trained as a psychologist and that fixation with an unresolved trauma of that kind really fascinated me. But in terms of language and style, too, it is a hugely inspiring book: obsessional in tone, written in a staccato rhythm, and quite 'in your face'."



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### Showing the ineffable

Van den Broeck has reduced the book's many characters to just two, a man and a woman. "It was immediately clear to me that we couldn't tell that story incident by incident. So I took from it the atmosphere and the most iconic figures: the mother/woman, and of course the man, Ellroy, as an adult but also as a child. Using movement and occasional fragments of text, I ask the dancers to inhabit those characters like shamans of a kind, in order to take on their quests and traumas and, if possible, to liberate them from them. We create a rather dark associative journey, in which we remain true to the book's own visceral energy. For, despite the fact that it is so cleverly told, you can feel the emotions lurking under and between the words. Dance is an excellent way of suggesting or showing the ineffable."

Van den Broeck deliberately decided to keep this a small-scale production: "At a particular moment, I asked myself why I so often surrounded myself with lots of people. Maybe it has to do with the fact I come from a large family. [Laughs] It was a fascinating experience to work with two dancers this time. It forces you to explore things in greater depth theatrically than you would with a large cast. Terribly interesting, but also quite challenging."

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- [JANUARY 2012 \(97\)](#)
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- [MAY 2012 \(211\)](#)
- [JUNE 2012 \(150\)](#)
- [JULY 2012 \(48\)](#)
- [AUGUST 2012 \(60\)](#)
- [SEPTEMBER 2012 \(161\)](#)
- [OCTOBER 2012 \(154\)](#)
- [NOVEMBER 2012 \(146\)](#)
- [DECEMBER 2012 \(96\)](#)
- [JANUARY 2013 \(132\)](#)
- [FEBRUARY 2013 \(138\)](#)
- [MARCH 2013 \(158\)](#)
- [APRIL 2013 \(140\)](#)
- [MAY 2013 \(149\)](#)
- [JUNE 2013 \(131\)](#)
- [JULY 2013 \(55\)](#)
- [AUGUST 2013 \(59\)](#)
- [SEPTEMBER 2013 \(127\)](#)
- [OCTOBER 2013 \(155\)](#)
- [NOVEMBER 2013 \(149\)](#)
- [DECEMBER 2013 \(93\)](#)
- [JANUARY 2014 \(131\)](#)
- [FEBRUARY 2014 \(135\)](#)
- [MARCH 2014 \(160\)](#)
- [APRIL 2014 \(123\)](#)
- [MAY 2014 \(129\)](#)
- [JUNE 2014 \(107\)](#)
- [JULY 2014 \(40\)](#)
- [AUGUST 2014 \(35\)](#)
- [SEPTEMBER 2014 \(122\)](#)
- [OCTOBER 2014 \(140\)](#)
- [NOVEMBER 2014 \(118\)](#)
- [DECEMBER 2014 \(82\)](#)
- [JANUARY 2015 \(110\)](#)
- [FEBRUARY 2015 \(103\)](#)
- [MARCH 2015 \(112\)](#)
- [APRIL 2015 \(124\)](#)
- [MAY 2015 \(114\)](#)
- [JUNE 2015 \(93\)](#)
- [JULY 2015 \(8\)](#)
- [AUGUST 2015 \(29\)](#)
- [SEPTEMBER 2015 \(75\)](#)
- [OCTOBER 2015 \(89\)](#)
- [NOVEMBER 2015 \(101\)](#)
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