

Maria Kraakman

“If I don’t know what to do with my body, I am very unhappy on stage”



The Dutch actor is appearing in Internationaal Theater Amsterdam’s *Age of Rage*, directed by Ivo van Hove and choreographed by Wim Vandekeybus, at the Barbican this month. With the entire ensemble having trained every day with Vandekeybus, Kraakman tells **Giverny Masso** what actors can learn from dance...

How does *Age of Rage* incorporate dance?

You could define *Age of Rage* as a clash between ancient Greek tragedies, a doom metal concert and *Game of Thrones*. It has a ritualistic vibe, and that is also because of the dance. There is no clear difference between dancing and acting in this performance, it all blends together.

What training did you receive during rehearsals?

We trained every day with choreographer Wim Vandekeybus, trying to find movements that reflected our characters and developing the choreography. This was quite intense because we are actors, not dancers. Our physical condition was not set up for that. In preparation for the performances in London, we got Pilates classes to strengthen our cores.

How did you get into performance?

I have been acting, dancing and singing since I was a child. I never wanted to become anything else but a performer. I auditioned for Toneelschool Arnhem [in the Netherlands] when I was 18 years old and luckily I was accepted.

What have been some of your career highlights so far?

I played Orlando in an adaptation of the novel by Virginia Woolf. One of the most beautiful, boundless and lovable characters in literature, and Virginia Woolf is my all-time favourite writer. Another part I loved to perform was She in the adaptation of The Year of Cancer, by Hugo Claus, a Flemish writer. This performance was directed by Luk Perceval and I came as close to dancing as I have ever been. And Martha, in Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf. I was still a bit young – 38 – when I played her, so I would love to have another go at that in 10 years or so.

How important is physicality to you in the development of a character?

My way of getting into acting and developing a character is through physical awareness. If I don't know what to do with my body, I am very unhappy on stage.

What can actors learn from dance?

The body doesn't lie. If you are not giving your performance all you've got, your body will tell and people will see. [Dance is] honest and forward, and I think actors should always use this energy in their performance. I also found that, in general, dancers are more disciplined than actors. Just repeating the movements, improving their technique, aiming for perfection. That kind of dedication, actors can also learn from dancing.