

A **ROMANTIC RISK**

*On Episode #1 A signal that travels
down through your heart*

by Eva Georgitsopoulou

Taking inspiration from romantic love ballads, choreographer Eva Georgitsopoulou breaks down stereotypes of romantic love.

In this text, Beatrix Joyce reflects on the piece with three dancers, performed at Acker Stadt Pallast in Berlin in March 2023, and asks Georgitsopoulou about her work and creation process.

Text commissioned by the artist.

When no one else can understand me
When everything I do is wrong
You give me hope and consolation
You give me strength to carry on
And you're always there to lend a hand
In everything I do
That's the wonder
The wonder of you

Elvis Presley - "The Wonder of You" (1970)

An epic, orchestral, big-band intro followed by steady drums and a wandering bassline. Elvis makes an early entrance, his deep, crooning voice soaring over the melody. Add in some wistful violins and a backing choir and you've got "The Wonder of You", sung by Elvis Presley in 1970. Now picture one woman dancing, her body moving in anticipation to the music, swaying to its highs and lows. She is alone, dancing like no one is watching.

This was the starting point for the dance piece *Episode #1: A signal that travels down through your heart* by Greek choreographer Eva Georgitsopoulou. Channeling big feelings of undying romance, she followed her desire to express and celebrate the endless hope and strength that we feel when we fall in love. Elvis Presley, along with Whitney Houston, served as an inspiration for her. She explains; "I would listen to these songs morning to night, no matter if I were tired and sleepy or feeling active. Even in my classes, I would keep putting them on. This tiredness, this desperation, entered my movement."

In her choreography, this urgency remained. Eva Georgitsopoulou, together with two dancers, Sevasti Zafeira and Tamae Yoneda, swept across the stage, performing bold extensions and intricate patterns with equal part aptitude and grace. Lithe and supple, they relived that moment of finding joy in a partner by finding joy in their movement. Through being in sync with and attuned to one another, they found in a personal pleasure a shared one.

Unlike the traditional fairytale love story between man and woman, this story played out between three women. In seeking to explore the

“love that comes from women”, Georgitsopoulou asked herself what lies at the core of that love. What can women teach us about love? What bonds do they form with each other? Can this form of love bring us together, in solidarity?

Questions the artist answered with a highly sophisticated movement vocabulary, composed of different sets of unison. One dancer left, the other followed. Another slipped away, the others remained. Together they negotiated their playing field and slid across the stage as one. Almost like a flock of birds, or a school of fish.

Image: Alex Papatanasopoulos



The animal kingdom, too, was a key inspiration for Georgitsopoulou. “When watching the mating rituals of birds, I was interested in the way they move, mostly when they flirt. They do this without flying; in what looks like a ceremony, they create a dance floor and shuffle about. For them, footwork is very impressive, so this is how they flirt with each other.”

The reference to the “footwork” of birds in the choreography was subtle, yet succinct. The three dancers often found themselves side by side, scuttling around with sharp, precise gestures. This gave their

movements a creature-like character, as if they were some strange hybrids between human and animal. Later, their arms took them on dives across the space, or quick swims through imaginary water. The way they came together and parted felt organic and coordinated, like the hive-mind of a species that needs to work together in order to survive.

Their costumes, composed of skin-tight, iridescent scales, furthered the impression of fish-like beings. Not unlike the Sirens, from Ancient Greek myth, the light shimmered and cadenced on their bodies, giving them a seductive shine and a mythical aura. They wore beauty on their skin, and although they were aware of it, they didn't get caught by it. Instead, their uniqueness and individuality rang through the choreography. Each performer had a slightly different mannerism, a personality that was given short solo moments or emphasised by the direction of the audience's gaze. Due to the overarching unison, moments dedicated to only one dancer became more apparent: a quick syncopy, a little delay, a short fall and recovery. Like individual seeds that once grew on the same tree.

On the piece's relationship with nature, Georgitsopoulou reflects: "Communication in nature is easy. An animal thinks; 'I'm about to do something, it's not working, ok goodbye. Let's move on.' This was a dramaturgical point of reference for me. An animal might try everything to meet their target, they make a massive effort, but if it doesn't work, it's cool, they let go. I find that really impressive." This sentiment was reflected in the dancers' struggle. The choreography was hardcore: it was quick, athletic, virtuosic. It required a great deal of skill, focus and stamina. The dancers were fully committed to their task. And within this dedication, within their effort, was vulnerability and exposure. They gave themselves over to the movement, to the stage, to the audience; by being fully committed to the vocabulary, and to each other, they took a risk.

On synchronised risk-taking, Georgitsopoulou notes; "For me, solidarity is hard work. I will never be you, but I will try to be you as much as possible. Synchronised movement was the tool for this piece. I told the dancers that we speak the same language; we may

be in the same world, but the way we feel it will always be a bit different and that's ok." The effort, in this sense, acted as a choreographic tool to be on the same page. As the dancers entered the same body-mind-state, the boundaries between 'who is who' and 'who does what' dissolved.

Image: Alex Papatathanasopoulos



However, mixed in with the zeal of their teamwork, there was also a sense of trepidation. A sense of distance. The choreography included a handful of failed moments: the dancers found a connection, but quickly dropped it. Their technique and commitment brought them close, but not too close. It was as if rather than diving into something, they were diving away from something. Similarly, in a final, solo dance, positioned in the far left-hand corner of the stage, Georgitsopoulou danced to a song arranged by sound designer Nefeli Lysimachou that echoed the romanticism of love ballads with estranged, softer notes. She chose to start this dance facing away from the audience. This created an ambiguous tension; were we witnessing something hidden, something private?

“When it comes to love, or romantic love especially, everyone has their

own personal stories. I wanted the piece to maintain a certain privacy. I wanted the dancers to feel that they were telling their story, but that they would only be asked to tell the audience as much as they felt they could understand. I wanted to give them the freedom to hide”, says Georgitsopoulou. The option to hide and keep their person safe, in a world filled with demands and exposure, gave these fantastical beings an ultimate super-power: self-love. Perhaps through exploring other outlets for romantic love and through experiencing it with each other, in a multitude of ways, they could find a deeper love for themselves. It is this sentiment that marked the final sequence; Georgitsopoulou was joined once again by the others and together they danced a fierce dance, empowered by their romantic selves.

Image descriptions:

- 1) The three female performers in skin-tight, iridescent, scaled suits standing in a line at the back of the stage, holding their hands against their chests in synchrony, against a beige backdrop.
- 2) The three female performers now in a tableau vivante-style position, holding each other's limbs up, with the dancer in the middle resting her head on the open palm of the dancer standing to her right, against a navy blue backdrop.