

artillery

DANCE

IN-1

BAM Harvey Theater, New York

THE TUMULTUOUS, romantic love story portrayed in *In-1* at BAM Harvey Theater in Brooklyn pitted French actress Juliette Binoche against British dancer of Bangladeshi origin Akram Khan. With a set designed by visual artist and previous Khan collaborator Anish Kapoor and scored by frequent Khan associate Philip Shepard, the piece proved to be a crowd pleaser, if something of a novelty: see the dancer act, see the actor dance. But that is oversimplifying the matter, since the dance-performance relied on both of these arts for it to succeed. While Binoche only had one year of dance training for her role, working with her coach Su-Man Hsu, her lack of formal training hardly mattered since she exhibited so much gusto and sex appeal.

Starting off with a voice-over by Binoche who swoons over a man she sees at a movie theater, the two meet and become



Khan and Binoche

lovers. A quarrel starts over the most mundane of domestic disputes: he likes the window left open, she likes it closed. An almost slapstick sequence about the stereotypical male using the toilet and having poor aim results in Binoche confronting his carelessness. The two strut, twirl and dance acrobatically across the stage and against a wall in a fevered game of catch-up and seduction. Much of the passionate dancing and give-and-take are an exaggerated form of any relationship, yet it took on a whole other level when Khan delivered a monologue about a mullah who held a knife to his throat after confessing he loved a non-Muslim girl. Despite Khan's inexperience as an actor, his storytelling ability was quite believable and brought a topical element to the narrative.

All of the action takes place on a minimal set by Kapoor, who worked with Khan on *Kaash* in 2002. Besides a black padded stage and two gray chairs, the main element was a 23-foot-high wall with panels made of Aerolam, attached to aluminum frames. The wall is miked to pick up the dancers sliding across the wall, sometimes in fits of ecstasy. Khan frequently leaves a trail of sweat as his head or body rubs against it, leaving a temporary impression of the heated interaction between him and Binoche. It comes into great effect when the two performers are nudging each other as they sleep, recreating a ritual many can no doubt relate to when in the company of a restless companion. The wall is also motorized and in the most dramatic sequence of the performance, Khan throws Binoche against the wall, where she sticks, her feet dangling from the floor. At that point Binoche is spotlighted with pitch-black surrounding her and the wall slowly creeps forward, leaving her positioned close to the edge of the stage..

Interestingly, Kapoor's wall doesn't resemble the ultra-refined, smooth aluminum and stainless steel of his well-known sculptures. Instead, it has a more industrial quality that is somewhat hidden with the ever-changing monochromatic hues of lighting designer Michael Hulls. Just another example of how *In-1* doesn't concern itself with slickness, but instead focuses on the humanity behind every aspect of its production.

PHOTO BY TRISTRAM KENTON

—Chris Bors