

A 31-year-old boy and a 87-year-old woman on the dancefloor: ‘Journey’, by Koen De Preter & Alpheia Pouget

review by Hans-Maarten Post (blog utopiaparkway.wordpress.com)

A choreography for a 87-year-old dancer. Of course there’s a gimmicky aspect to it. It’s a little piece of information that makes *Journey*, by young Belgian choreographer [Koen De Preter](#) and [Alpheia Pouget](#), stand out. But it’s to his credit that De Preter tries to steer his touching duet away from everything that might look too obvious or cheesy, and comes up with a light piece that is as unpretentious as it is enjoyable for a broader audience.

They met in 2010 in the south of France. He: a young Flemish choreographer who had already worked with Raimund Hoghe and Sasha Waltz, and who created *Sometimes it’s there* with Ulrika Kinn Svensson and *We dance to forget* with Maria Ibarretxe. She: a teacher and a dancer, born in 1925 in Sweden and the wife of French [Nouvelle figuration](#)-painter Marcel Pouget (1923-1985). He had been thinking about working with older performers; she gladly accepted his invitation.



What would I do if I had to come up with a choreography for a 87-year-old dancer? A duet for a younger man full of energy and an older, fragile and much slower woman? As I was watching *Journey* I couldn’t help asking myself that question. How would I solve the problems that dancing with an older dancer present? How would I deal with the things the juxtaposition of a younger and older body evoke?

Journey consists of a series of short, simple scenes. Sometimes rather theatrical, sometimes built on just a gesture or movement; on a varied soundtrack with pop songs, classical music and dance beats. You'll hear Beethoven's *Pathétique* and Alicia Keys' *Girl on fire*. Sometimes they aim for a poetic effect (Pouget performing a touching solo, lying on the floor, on Beethoven), sometimes for a comical one (a 87-year-old woman dancing while Alicia Keys sings *She's just a girl, and she's on fire?*). And I couldn't help laughing during another scene: De Preter wildly dancing, Pouget just shrugging, walking to the side of the stage to pour herself a glass of water, thinking: those youngsters, needing to show off.



I must confess that I'm not always following Koen De Preter, in the decisions he made, while constructing *Journey*. Not all his scenes are equally strong. Of course he wants to talk about ageing, but the fact is that the difference in age between that man and that woman on stage is that obvious, that I feel there's no need to stress it.

Many of the better moments are when the difference in age is not pointed out. When it's just about two dancers, and one of them just happens to be a much older one. That's why, for instance, the moment when they start dancing in unison for the first time, right after you've seen them just walking around on stage, is so beautiful. That young body and that older body, next to each other, moving in the same way.

But, as I said, I liked the light tone of this choreography, and the willingness to communicate with a broader audience, without losing touch with the world of contemporary dance. In the days after I had seen it, images from *Journey* kept coming back to me, again and again.