

# Charming Middle Finger

Louis Vanhaverbeke / Campo

LOUIS VANHAVERBEKE CHALLENGES RIGID NORMALITY IN *MIKADO REMIX*, AN INVENTIVE ODE TO FOLLY.

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Vanhaverbeke has never been keen on anything that goes without saying. This theatre-maker and songwriter from Ghent is a DIY enthusiast who builds his own set and discovers unexpected functions in everyday objects. In *Mikado Remix*, his third offspring, he examines how restrictive our notion of normality has become.

Vanhaverbeke starts in one of our most norm-imposing spaces, an isolation cell built using four site fences. This songsmith has to break these open – while singing, rapping and beatboxing – before his set comes fully to life, because he constructs his songs using the objects on stage. Vanhaverbeke's range of instruments is staggering: he plays the flute with an iron fence and elicits pounding basses from simple plastic boxes. You have to admit that you have not seen many singers knocking together their own stage set.

## Acrobat

The critical depth of the performance should emerge from the lyrics, but they yield few surprising insights. Vanhaverbeke makes a few stabs and thrusts at conformism and nationalism, while his identical plastic boxes symbolise the sameness of everything – an obvious metaphor.

What is truly compelling is the way he puts his songs together: like an acrobat he swings between his mechanical orchestra and forges monotonous voices together to make an ode to imagination.

In this way, his expanding field of action serves as an antidote to any restrictive thinking. In the closing scene Vanhaverbeke gets on his bike, cheerfully cycles out of the Beursschouwburg and races round a few Brussels streets, warbling out loud about our society's 'Lostland'. If *Mikado Remix* does stick up its middle finger, it does so with disarming charm.