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# Dispatches from The Fringe - Wage is powerful, political and poignant

September 6, 2013

10:03 PM MST



Wage by Fitzgerald and Stapleton Dance Theatre  
*Dublin Fringe Festival*

## Dublin Fringe Festival 2013

Rating: ★★★★★

Entering The Cube at the Project Arts Centre, the audience is greeted by two naked women on stage. They *dance*, grunt and groan, their movements disjointed, their bodies twisting into apparently random shapes and contortions. As *Wage* commences patterns seem to emerge. Mirrorings and repetitions take shape. Of movements, gestures, song and text. At all times imbued with power and grace, *Wage* offers a deeply serious, yet charmingly playful subversion of dance, of gender, of expectations and conventions by two incredibly talented artists.

In *Wage*, form serves the artist rather than the artist serving the form. Throughout, dancers Aine Stapleton and Emma Fitzgerald play with movement in a manner that subverts dance but never the dancer. Mirrorings are never precise, rather their disjointedness allows for the individual

personality of each performer to shine through. The use of video images projected onto the back wall is cleverly handled, in particular the mock, pop video whose obvious humor conceals a deeply worrying concern. But it is Stapleton and Fitzgerald who are the real focus. A long sequence, performed in silence under a spotlight, in which a dance of gazes, aversions and returns takes place, is beautifully and mesmerizingly rendered.

If, as a performance with a political statement, *Wage* is unquestionably powerful, its end sequence, where direct political statement becomes performance, is a little less satisfying. In an uneasy transition, former prostitute, Justine Reilly, bravely took to the stage with Fitzgerald and Stapleton to discuss the horrific plight of prostitutes in Ireland. With all three dressed and seated on cushions, it ran the risk of feeling like a lecture, or an explanation, of being too easily tagged on and might perhaps have been more successful as a post-show discussion. It distracted from, and slightly undermined, the incredible performance that preceded it. Also, it directed the focus of that performance onto a single theme, prostitution, and risked losing other possible interpretations of *Wage* that may have been available.

Yet the closing talk was equally as important as the performance. Justine Reilly was eloquent, intelligent and insightful throughout her deeply moving account of the life of an Irish prostitute. Her assertion that prostitution is not solely a feminine concern opened the issue in a way that made it more inclusive, suggesting that a rethinking of sex, of prostitution and of gender holds real possibilities for new levels of understanding and equality between the sexes.

If the juxtaposition of its two wonderfully engaging sections wasn't as successful as it might have been, each section in itself was undoubtedly powerful, incredibly touching and frequently funny. But *Wage* is more than the sum of its parts. With its two mesmerising, central performances, *Wage* is disarmingly humorous, deeply poignant and definitely not to be missed.

*Wage*, by Fitzgerald and Stapleton [Dance Theatre](#), runs at The Cube at The Project Arts Centre from September 7th – 10th at 9.00 p.m. daily.

Tickets are 14/12/10 euro. Tickets are offered at a discounted rate to female, or identified female members of the audience to reflect the gender pay gap in Ireland.

Advisory: this show contains nudity



**Chris O'Rourke**  
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