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Dublin Dance Festival 2016 dancing the digital landscape

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Luca Truffarelli

Time Over Distance Over Time by Liz Roche and Bias by Katherine O'Malley

Rating: ★★★★★

Opposites make for compelling contrasts in two multi-disciplinary, new productions from Liz Roche Company. One sees a single, understated performer successfully engage with a series of projections which cleverly inform her short, twenty minute performance. The other sees a group of six dancers, whose hour long, high octane performance is undermined by its attempts to engage with a variety of visual media. If the strengths of this yin yang, double bill ultimately outweigh the problems, it's perhaps because a number of those problems weren't helped by the imposed limitations of the venue, whose sense of intimacy couldn't compensate for poor sightlines.

“Bias” sees Liz Roche Company’s associate artist, Katherine O’Malley, collaborating with composer Daragh Dukes and film maker Mark Linnane, to explore the theme of prejudice, of repeated

patterns of unconscious behaviour made in split second decisions. O'Malley interacts and respond to a series of three short movies by Linnane, projected onto walls around the space. Including one projected into a recessed space completely obscured to a significant number of the audience. Sightlines were problematic throughout, with pillars partially obstructing views at all times. Struggling against this, Linnane's movies show O'Malley in a number of spaces including the coast, a forest and a pier, performing circular patterns of repeated movements that establish a series of physical motifs. When O'Malley physically enters the space things become much more interesting. For a moment it all looks like a sort of low tech mirroring exercise, but O'Malley's superbly timed interactions force the eye to engage with the images that haunt the periphery of vision, which encumbered sightlines didn't help. A hypnotic repetition of movement patterns evolves, subtle and understated, but extremely compelling none the less, and the whole casts a spell and a stillness that ultimately captivates.

In contrast, "Time Over Distance Over Time" announces itself with a wild, yet controlled exuberance. Choreographed by Liz Roche in collaboration with performers Grant McLay, Jenny Roche, Simone Litchfield, Henry Montes, Rahel Vonmoos and Kevin Coquelard, "Time Over Distance Over Time" is a thoughtful, intimate and deeply moving exploration of the physical and emotional distance experienced by those living on opposite ends of the planet, where Facetime and Skype are poor substitutes to the real, living presence. Filled with hope, pain, longing and memory, "Time Over Distance Over Time" begins with a whirlwind as six dancers, groping through closed eyes, grasp and release each other in a demented circle where the pull and push tells of the dread of letting go and returning. Split second timing, flawlessly executed, informs this wonderful sequence imbued with a wild, relentless energy. But after its breath taking opening, "Time Over Distance Over Time" transitions slowly into a sort of multimedia installation and the energy and pace slacken considerably as [dance](#) takes a back seat. Dancers slowly begin to build a kind of angular sculpture from wood or cardboard panels, again obscured by pillars for much of the audience, which, if unsuccessful during this segment, serves as an apt, if somewhat obvious metaphor at the end. A sequence involving a camera and projected images follows which, while engaging enough, particularly the sequence where performers fade from the screen, isn't all it might have been. There's a real sense of an opportunity missed and, again, trouble with sightlines. But if, like the absent other on the end of a Skype call, the projection isn't as good as the real thing, the collaboration between dance and text is exquisite. "I'm trying to get rid of you," one dancer cries, and text and movement prove far more powerful as memories are relived, moments revisited and the body reigns supreme, as when a couple meet, embrace and let go over and over and over.

Both "Bias" and "Time Over Distance Over Time" are to be commended for exploring collaborative, multi-disciplinary possibilities. If "Bias" managed to integrate its collaborations well, with "Time Over Distance Over Time" they just didn't live up to the quality of the dance, failing to make a powerful or interesting enough contribution to what was already an astonishing piece. For "Time Over Distance Over Time" shows moments of pure genius, reminding us of Roche's unique talent for crafting powerful, resonant performances.

"Time Over Distance Over Time" by Liz Roche Company and "Bias" by Katherine O'Malley run as

part of the [Dublin Dance Festival 2016](#) at The Complex until May 21st

Post show talk on Friday 20th with Lynette Moran

For information on times and tickets visit [Dublin Dance Festival 2016](#)



Chris O'Rourke

Theatre Examiner

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