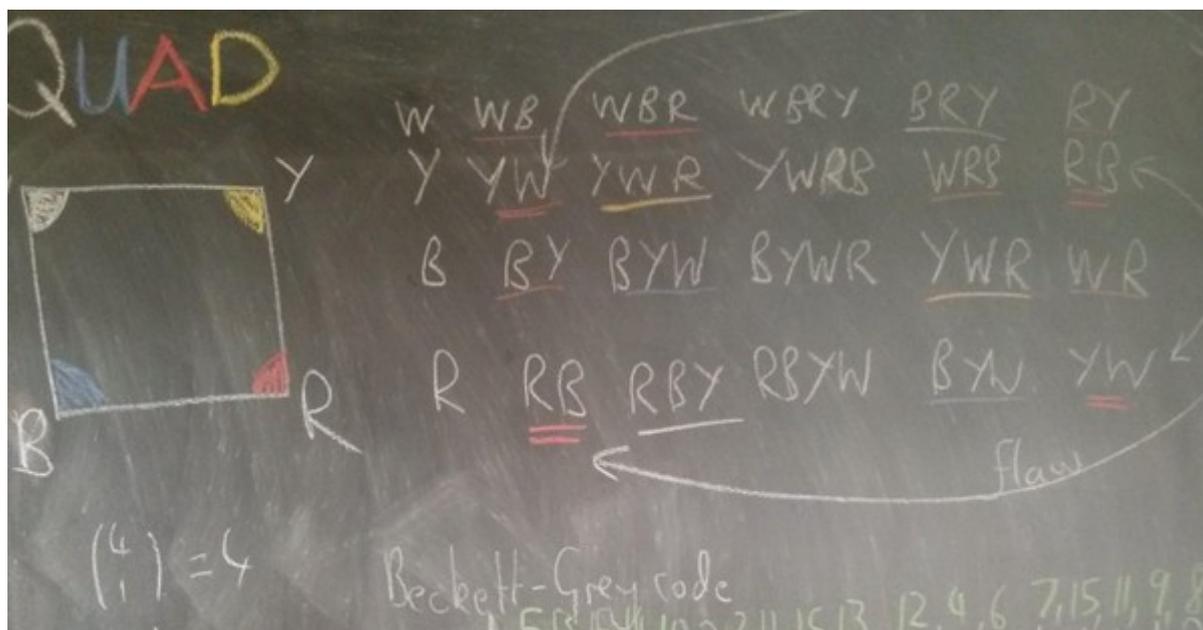


AXS ENTERTAINMENT / ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT / PERFORMING ARTS

Dublin Dance Festival 2014 - Here Comes The Math Bit

May 31, 2014

8:10 AM MST



Quad by Pan Pan Theatre Company and Irish Modern Dance Theatre
Pan Pan Theatre Company

Quad by Pan Pan Theatre Company and Irish Modern Dance Theatre

Rating: ★★★★★

Upon entering the auditorium for Pan Pan Theatre and Irish Modern Dance Theatre's production of Samuel Beckett's, *Quad*, early signs are not auspicious. A large blackboard with what appears to be code written in colored chalk gives the impression that the audience is about to be lectured for quite some time. The large square outlined on the floor in white tape doesn't help ease these concerns. Nor does the small podium with a laptop, adjacent to which stands a small table with laser pointer and books. The four men talking near the onstage sound engineer look like academics rather than artists. Indeed the only indication that a performance might take place is the dancers limbering up discreetly behind the blackboard. First impressions suggest this might be a dull evening. First impressions couldn't be more wrong.

Pan Pan director Gavin Quinn, along with Irish Modern Dance Theater founder, John Scott, Mathematician, Conor Houghton and Beckett scholar and Assistant Professor of Drama, Nicolas Johnson take to the stage to give some background to *Quad* and on this lecture demonstration. Originally written for television without ever being intended for live performance, *Quad* is an intricately choreographed piece. Four dancers outline a quadrangle to a rapid, percussive beat, each with signature lighting and sound. Always turning left, they enter the square always resisting the centre. A pattern emerges as collisions are avoided, all built on mathematical reasoning, flawed though that reasoning may be.

Quad does indeed begin with a lecture as Houghton discusses the mathematical references in Beckett's work with obvious passion and delight. Engaging, for the most part, his demonstration on the number of possible ways one can pick up objects is particularly entertaining. Houghton then shows where Beckett got the Math wrong in *Quad*. This, he argues, is a good thing and quite possibly deliberate, as Beckett had set himself an unsolvable problem and knew it.

Lecturing eventually cedes the stage to performance as four dancers re-enact *Quad* before the audience. Dressed in white, yellow, blue and red hoodies they negotiate the square, following the mathematical sequence at pace, to a minimalist sound score by Jimmy Eadie. This is supported by an exquisitely executed lighting design by Aedin Cosgrove, following Beckett's abandoned guidelines for same. The result is curiously moving, with moments where the dancers negotiate avoiding the centre being particularly resonant. A second piece, *Quad II*, follows the same pattern as *Quad*, but with much slower movements without sound or lighting. The contrast is striking with *Quad II* creating almost unbearable tension. The final demonstration, a world premiere of the first segment of a mathematically perfect sequence called *Quin*, featured five dancers moving at pace around and through a pentagon that had been quickly taped to the floor. Though precise and interesting to watch, this had less emotional impact than either *Quad* or *Quad II*.

A short, post performance discussion brought home the realization that even the tiniest alteration in lighting, pace, or sound can utterly transform a performance. Add one dancer, one more line that changes the shape, and the whole changes utterly. But its real insight lay in demonstrating that what is perfect may not be as satisfying as what is imperfect. Indeed, sometimes the perfect may be imperfect and the imperfect perfect. In all, a timely reminder of the genius of Beckett, the importance and limits of structure and of the sometimes strange perfection that is the imperfect human being.

Running for 90 minutes, *Quad* is both intriguing and engaging, though it does have its flaws. The lecture might have been tighter to allow more time for post show discussion. The show wasn't perfect, but in a way that's the point. *Quad* doesn't strive for perfection, rather it is a brave and rewarding attempt to fuse theory and practice and the result is both viscerally and intellectually stimulating.

Quad runs at The Project Arts Centre as part of The Dublin Dance Festival until Saturday, May 31st.

For information on times, tickets, etc., please follow this link:

<http://www.dublindancefestival.ie>



Chris O'Rourke
Tulsa Theater Examiner

© 2006-2015 AXS Digital Group LLC d/b/a Examiner.com