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Dispatches from The Fringe – The Best Presents Come In Small Parcels

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The Whistle and TURF

The Whistle by Squarehead Production, *TURF* by Ewa Figaszewska

The Whistle and TURF

Rating: ★★★★★

Tucked away on the top floor of the Trinity Dance Studio, adjacent to the Samuel Beckett Theatre, a little magic has been quietly taking place. A double bill of two, thirty minute shows, *The Whistle*, featuring Darragh McLoughlin and presented by Squarehead Productions, and *TURF*, by Liadain S. Herriott, have been performing to small, intimate audiences. Complimentary yet contrasting productions, *The Whistle* and *TURF* are a testament that passion, skill and simplicity can create the most profoundly beautiful, delightfully funny and deeply moving works.

In the charmingly playful, *The Whistle*, Darragh McLoughlin toys with what happens when we watch, when we don't watch and when we watch when we're not supposed to. Reminiscent of silent comedians like Buster Keaton, McLoughlin's set ups, prat falls and juggling are deftly executed. Resembling street performance or performance art at times, *The Whistle* is cleverly

based on the simplest premise: close your eyes or open them at the shrill of a whistle. You can choose to play the game or cheat. Either way you create the story. Spread over five chapters, comical images and alternate narratives unfold, depending on when and what you're watching. It may be tempting to look behind the wizard's curtain all the time, and indeed it is highly recommended you do so on occasion, but the experience is enhanced by following instructions at least some of the time. Funny, touching and performed with consummate skill, *The Whistle* has an ease and charm that makes it irresistible.

In contrast, *TURF*, by Liadain S. Herriott, takes us on a dark, mysterious journey. Entering the dimly lit space like a ghostly Cathy searching the moors, Herriott stands in a dress and apron, cradling a bottle of milky tea. It is September, the men are cutting turf well into the night and the women come with refreshments. But Herriott is a woman alone, rooted, seeming to struggle to move in the darkness. Gradually patterns of movement emerge and are repeated as Herriott twists and jolts as if at the behest of some demented puppeteer. Presently the bottle is placed on the ground and a series of spider like contortions are wonderfully executed. The apron is removed and Herriott eventually finds her way to the light in an enchantingly beautiful sequence. In what follows, a sublime sense of release is achieved as arms stretch towards the sky. But the experience is short lived. Slowly the puppeteer, the apron and the bottle return to reclaim her. Exquisitely choreographed by Herriott, *TURF* tells a haunting, poetic tale, brimming with passion, grace and moments of astonishing beauty.

It's often difficult for shorter works to find an audience so kudos to Kris Nelson for allowing these twin treasures to have a platform in the Tiger Dublin Fringe. For *The Whistle* and *TURF* are a timely reminder that sometimes the most magical and memorable of moments are created not with spectacle, but simply by a man, or a woman, performing alone before an audience.

The Whistle and *TURF* run as part of The Dublin Tiger Fringe at Trinity Dance Studio, The Samuel Beckett Theatre, until Sunday, September 14th

Doors open 8.00 p.m.

Tickets €14.00 Concessions €12.00

For more information go to <http://fringefest.com/festival/programme>



Chris O'Rourke

Tulsa Theater Examiner

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