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Dispatches from The Fringe - Preissner's Solpadeine is poetry in motion

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Stefanie Preissner, *Solpadeine Is My Boyfriend*
With an 'F' Productions

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Rating: ★★★★★

A homesick, Cork woman relocates to Dublin, followed by a stray, black dog and text messages that get less frequent as the days pass. Eventually she meets Stephen, an engineer who almost kills her, and they embark on a love, hate, love again, hate again rollercoaster ride they call a relationship. But this woman has issues, and Stephen has issues with her issues. She has issues with herself, with dysfunctional expectations of a dysfunctional society, with the indecisive Stephen and with Solpadeine. She takes three every morning just to start the day and keeps them hidden beneath the sink. Solpadeine numbs the too much emotions her hypersensitivity feels in a world where no one does what they say they'll do. Solpadeine takes better care of her than her boyfriend does, around whom thoughts of suicide and fantasies of well attended funerals are never too far away. The struggle to keep loneliness, fear and abandonment at bay, in a world and a woman on the verge of catastrophe, sits at the heart of Stefanie Preissner's marvellous new play,

Solpadeine Is My Boyfriend, a dark, delightful and intelligent comedy and a one woman, tour de force.

Produced by With An 'F' Productions and performed by author Stefanie Preissner, *Solpadeine Is My Boyfriend* falls into two distinct segments. The first charts her move to Dublin and her uncertain relationship with Stephen, who has one eye on moving to Australia. The second relates a series of rambling observations and insights illuminating the whys behind the whats of this woman's existence.

Solpadeine, part caffeine, part paracetamol, part codeine, with an irresistible attraction to water, is one of many metaphors that run throughout *Solpadeine Is My Boyfriend*. Written, for the most part, in rhyming couplets so good they almost appear conversational, Preissner effortlessly manipulates language and pitches her delivery to perfection. On the rare occasion when the rhythmic restrictions of the couplet risks stunting expressive possibilities, Preissner astutely shifts to saying it as it is. Most notably when, with back turned to the audience, she lists a catalogue of ways in which she is worthless, failed, a failure and afraid. At one point the character herself becomes a metaphor. A kind of 21st century Cathleen Ni Houlihan, repelling her young men to distant shores as far away as Australia. Men who want to love her, who feel bound to her by guilt, but who don't feel any real connection to her anymore.

Director Gina Moxley does an outstanding job in creating a space where Preissner blossoms and flourishes under her mentoring guidance. Onstage, with only an enlarged bean bag and a boxing bag suspended from above, Preissner is utterly engaging. Exuding a paradoxically confident lack of self confidence, Preissner embodies the strength of a survivor with the fragile vulnerability of an innocent abroad.

The plight of those who take flight to the diaspora and of those who remain to fight, or are just too frozen to move but still feel everything, is explored with passion and tenderness, rage and silence, hurt and hope in this memorable performance of a memorable new play. In *Solpadeine Is My Boyfriend*, Stefanie Preissner shows herself to be a serious talent well on the road to becoming a major one. If Preissner is not deservedly nominated for serious honours then a travesty of justice will have occurred. Word of mouth says this is one of the best shows of the festival. But don't believe the hype. *Solpadeine Is My Boyfriend* is way, way better than that.

Solpadeine Is My Boyfriend runs at The Project Arts Centre – The Cube, until September 15th. Doors open at 1.00 p.m. Tickets are €13.00



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