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Dublin Dance Festival 2015 – The poetry of motion

May 26, 2015

7:31 PM MST



Bastard Amber by Liz Roche Company

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Rating: ★★★★★

Bastard Amber, by Liz Roche Company, which premiered at the [Abbey Theatre](#) as part of The [Dublin Dance Festival 2015](#), marks the first time an Irish choreographer has been commissioned to create a [dance](#) work for the Abbey stage. Inspired by several sources, including the Gold Meditation paintings of the of late Patrick Scott, as well as *Four Plays for Dancers* by W.B. Yeats, it is Yeats's classic poem, *Sailing to Byzantium*, which serves as the central jumping off point for Liz Roche's latest creation. And jump it does, taking a leap of faith and striking out on its own. For while these influences are ever present, *Bastard Amber* is more than the sum of its parts. Under Roche's meticulous choreography a sort synergy takes place creating a uniquely individual work, stunning in both execution and simplicity.

In its rich exploration of body and soul, *Bastard Amber* inhabits a liminal space between many worlds. The worlds of east and west, of poetry, art and dance are ever present, but *Bastard Amber*

fashions a world all of its own making, with its own mood and texture. Ray Harman's eclectic score does much to inform this. Haunting, dissonant, tribal, the whole has an almost liturgical intensity. Against this, and against spells of silence, eight dancers create moments that appear then disappear like wisps of smoke. Patterns emerge but never linger, groupings are fleeting, formed from fluid interchanges often ending in momentary tableaux. Throughout, the body is the conduit for the soul, its home and scourge, its limit and fulfilment, and transcendence is constantly sought, with release found only in the final moment.

Roche's sense of the stage as a sacred space informs *Bastard Amber's* excellent choreographic choices. The fluidity of constantly shifting patterns and groupings show a choreographic sensibility that both commands and responds to the space. Paul Will's set design and Lee Curran's lighting design add depth and texture, though the long fade of projected text on the back wall distracted from the dancers on occasion. Dancers H  l  ne Cathala, Sarah Cerneaux, Alexandre Iseli, Henry Montes, Liv O'Donoghue, Katherine O'Malley, Marc Stevenson and Liz Roche, individually and collectively, create a rich tapestry of often simple movements, woven into a complex, harmonised whole. Musicians Zo   Conway, Ray Harman, John McIntyre and Bryan O'Connell, performing live on stage, contribute to both the richness and immediacy of the performance, with Conway's haunting voice informing *Bastard Amber's* deep sense of other worldliness.

In *Bastard Amber*, Roche creates the sense that what's on stage is only part of the picture, that all is being informed by movements and forces at the periphery of vision. There's a wonderful, innate tranquillity to *Bastard Amber*, an understated sense of power that underscores its apparent simplicity. If, as Da Vinci stated, simplicity is the ultimate sophistication, then *Bastard Amber* attains to the height of that sophistication. *Bastard Amber* is a stunning and beautiful production, worthy of its historic commission and a fitting tribute to one of Ireland's foremost choreographers. Not to be missed.

Bastard Amber runs at The Abbey Theatre until May 27th as part of the Dublin Dance Festival 2015.

Shows begins: 7.30 p.m.

Tickets: €38 - €17. Concessions: €34 - €15.

For more information go to:

<http://www.dublindancefestival.ie/>

<http://www.abbeytheatre.ie/>



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