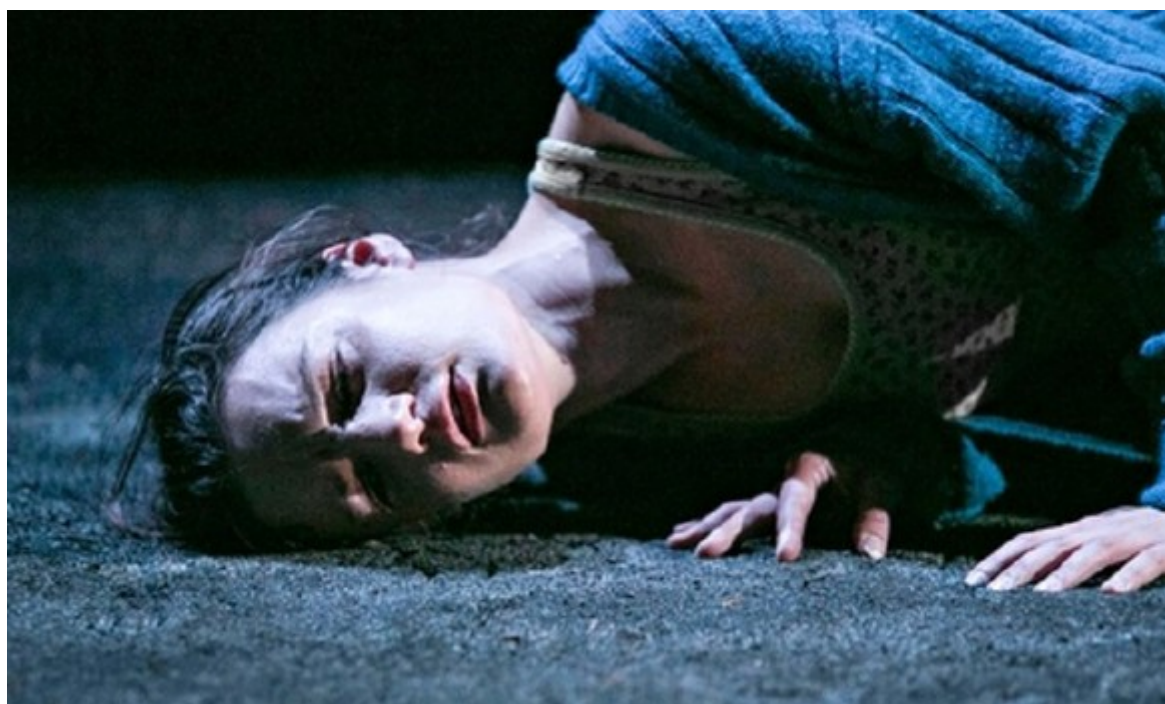


AXS ENTERTAINMENT / ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT / PERFORMING ARTS

Dublin Theatre Festival 2014 – A Half Formed Girl Reined In Too Tightly

October 2, 2014

9:16 PM MST



Aoife Duffin in *A Girl Is A Half Formed Thing* by The Corn Exchange
The Corn Exchange Theatre Company

A Girl Is A Half Formed Thing

Rating: ★★★★★

Eimear McBride's breath-taking, debut novel, *A Girl Is A Half Formed Thing*, offers a horrific depiction of a young girl's tragic journey through sexual and emotional abuse into self-abuse and beyond. It is a remarkable and powerful story whose fractured language aids in evoking the immediacy of its central character's inner experiences. Adapted for the theatre and directed by Annie Ryan of The Corn Exchange Theatre Company, and performed by Aoife Duffin, *A Girl Is A Half Formed Thing* makes the transition from novel to one woman monologue in an uneven fashion. While the story and language still retain their power to disturb, theatrically *A Girl Is A Half Formed Thing* wasn't all it might have been.

Following an unnamed, spirited girl from the womb until her twentieth year, narrative moves

forward in linear fashion often with abrupt changes between times and locations. Throughout, language evokes a world more internal than external. Indeed nowhere and no-one is named beyond brief designations such as mother, brother, uncle, city, school. Here religion is loved, despised and wrestled with, sex can be power with a heavy price and both men and women terrorise the young in their different fashions. Following her first harrowing experience, Girl descends into a spiral of meaningless and abusive relations, becoming an object of disappointment and disgust for her fanatically religious mother and a sexualised object for a series of nameless men. The only good in her world comes in the shape of her brother who has been diagnosed with brain cancer. Returning home from college to be with him results in old wounds reopening and the creation of fresher, more dangerous wounds, as all about her begins to come crashing down.

As writer, Ryan remains faithful to the book, and to its evocative use of language, retaining much of its potency throughout. Directorially Ryan made some strong, clear choices, some more successful than others. Opting for a minimal set design by Lian Bell was an effective way of allowing language to evoke Girl's world and experiences. But minimalism heightened focus on Duffin's physical vocabulary which was surprisingly limited, often restricted by a rigidity of arms and movement, along with simplistic, repeated gestures to define different characters. If physical rigidity suggested Girl's sense of confinement and disgust, it was performatively confining and a card played far too often that risked reducing Duffin to a talking head on occasion. Despite these restraints, Duffin negotiated the various characters excellently for the most part, though some transitions were confusing at times. Dressed in pyjamas, Duffin's vulnerable, Everygirl hiding behind her bravado was frighteningly identifiable and familiar, and her moving account of Girl's story reinforced the sense, and fear, that these experiences could easily happen, and do easily happen, to many woman.

Theatrically, *A Girl Is A Half Formed Thing*, often gave the sense of reining itself in, of prioritizing language over performance. When Duffin momentarily and memorably slipped the reins near the end in one of the plays most harrowing scenes, the power and potency she brought to the moment was heart breaking and terrifying. But this also served to highlight what could have been in a production with a powerful, moving and disturbing story, but one capable of reaching even greater heights.

A Girl Is A Half Formed Thing by The Corn Exchange runs as part of The Dublin Theatre Festival at The Samuel Beckett Theatre until Sunday, October 5th

Doors open 7.30 p.m. Matinees Saturday and Sunday at 2.30 p.m.

Tickets €30.00

For more information go to <https://www.dublintheatrefestival.com>

Chris O'Rourke
Tulsa Theater Examiner



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